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# Thoughts on Themes from Patmos

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BY

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Editor of "The Twentieth Century Pastor"

VOLUME ONE

PHILADELPHIA

1910

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Affectionately dedicated to my wife

## FOREWORD.

The following pages contain the substance of sermons preached in the regular course of the author's ministry. There is no attempt, in these notes, at literary finish, or to explain the Book from which the texts are taken. The object of the author is to point out themes in which the Apocalypse abounds, and suggest thoughts for their discussion. This unpretentious volume is sent forth with the prayer that it may be made a blessing.



## CONTENTS.

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1. THE DEMOCRACY OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH .....	7
2. THE HANDS OF JESUS.....	19
3. THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS—THE DECLINING CHURCH .....	31
4. THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS—THE DECLINING CHURCH—PART SECOND.	41
5. PARADISE .....	51
6. THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA—THE SUFFERING CHURCH .....	59
7. PERSONAL FAITHFULNESS TO CHRIST .....	73
8. THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS .....	83
9. PERGAMENE CHRISTIANS .....	93
10. THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA .....	103
11. THE CHURCH AT SARDIS .....	117

12. THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA.... 129

13. THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA—

PART SECOND ..... 139

14. THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA..... 149

15. CHRIST AT THE DOOR..... 161

16. SPIRITUAL INTROSPECTION ..... 171

17. THE THRONE OF GOD..... 179

18. THE NEW SONG AND ITS SINGERS.. 189

19. THE OPENING OF THE SEALS..... 201

20. JUDGMENT RESTRAINED..... 215

21. MAN IN HEAVEN..... 223

22. SILENCE IN HEAVEN..... 233

23. THE RAINBOW ROUND THE THRONE 243

24. THE END OF TIME..... 253

25. FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE..... 265

26. CHRISTIANITY'S VOICE..... 277

27. THE SEALESS WORLD..... 285

## THE DEMOCRACY OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.

"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man."—Rev. 1:13.

It was a unique title Jesus gave Himself when He called Himself the Son of Man. Kings and conquerors in the pride of their hearts loved to be esteemed as the progeny of deities; but who of all the noted of earth ever gave himself this title? He possessed human nature; but He descended from the race, rather than from a member thereof. The circumstances of His birth were peculiar. He ever stood out from those limitations which narrow the nature and lives of men. When they would limit Him with family boundaries He swept away such limitations, declaring that all were His relatives who did the will of His Father which was in heaven. Men are limited by national prejudices, family standing, education, and ambition; but Jesus was not. Great gulfs yawn between men and their fellows over which they cannot pass to each other; but no such gulfs yawned between Christ and men. His great heart went out towards all men. He had an affinity for them all, as He is of them all.

And He ever showed His profound regard for men; nor was this regard at all influenced by the standing of men. The human family was on the same platform before His mind, and not one of them towered above the other in His esteem because of affluence or station. He knew no man for the fineness of his coat, or the magnitude of his fortune or his brain. They who

gazed in His face and heard His words, and saw His doings, could not fail to be impressed that, profound interest in the welfare of mankind mastered His soul. He had the characteristics of nature as a man that would yet draw the world to Him.

But has the world been bereft of Him? Are there to be seen no more manifestations of His great regard for men? Shall His splendid democracy of spirit no more fill men with admiration for Him and draw them to Him?

The world has not been bereft of Him. As John saw the church, represented by the seven golden candlesticks, he saw in the midst thereof not a merely spiritual personality surrounded by great glory and waited upon by angelic attendants, but he saw one like unto the Son of Man. Marvelous was His appearance to the eye of the Seer and full of teaching for the enlightenment of the ages; but we would most fix our attention upon the fact that earth is not without the Son of Man; that He is in His church, to manifest through her His deep interest in universal man. He is in her midst that as her life and soul He may use her heart and brains and hands and feet to continue His life on an ever-increasingly larger scale than He lived when He first appeared among men. Paul declared that for him to live was Christ. The declaration of the Church should be, for me to live is the Son of Man. But how may the Church thus live?

1. *By showing a deep and impartial interest in all men.* This Jesus did. Nature's forces in unknown times formed on earth's surface high mountains and rolling landscapes; also valleys and far-reaching plains



So have certain forces operating in the human world brought into existence a diversity of altitudes among men, which are termed the classes of society. The lofty class looks down upon all beneath it, and this treatment of men by their fellows has brought about unrest and antagonism. The high class of society has demanded, and has received a homage that has been denied all other classes. Purse, social standing, learning, chivalry and elevated position, have attracted and held the respect of men in all the ages. But Jesus never came under the influence of these. He never bowed to a man because of his wealth or standing. He was interested in the poor as much as in the rich, in the man of no name as well as the man of renown. He wrought wonders for people; but He showed His power for the Syro-Phoenician woman as much as for one of Rome's Centurions.

Indeed, His democratic spirit was not liked when He sojourned among men. If He had walked with a high head He would have gathered about Him those who would have ever been feasting Him. If He had put on a pietistic face and walked with a step afraid of touching vulgar things, He might have had many of the Pharisees as His warm friends. But He put on no such airs; He mingled with men as He met them. He was social with all classes of society, so much so that the high-toned Pharisee, out of the contempt of his soul seeking to slight His name, declared that He was a friend of publicans and sinners, a truth that is filling the world with gladness.

Now as the spirit of class distinction never entered into the thought of Christ in His conduct towards

men, so neither should it enter into the thought, or appear in the conduct of His Church as it seeks the welfare of men. By no act of hers should she make the impression that the souls of the upper classes of society are of more importance to Christ than the souls of the lower. It would grieve the heart of the Son of Man if the Church should by any act of hers intimate that He is more interested in the moral uplift of a sensuous king than He is of a godless pauper. It is the duty of the Church without discrimination to be enthusiastically interested in the welfare of all men, to have as kindly a word for the man of low degree as for him of superior station. Thus doing, shall the Church continue the life of the Son of Man, for thus shall she give all classes to feel that His great heart is throbbing through hers in sympathy for them. The Church continues the life of the Son of Man on earth.

2. *By being on the mission on which He came.* Never did one appear among men on such a mission as that on which the Son of Man came. He came to seek and to save the lost. He did not come to teach men science and philosophy; He did not come to promote industry; He did not come to direct the steps of genius in the paths of discovery—He came on one soul-absorbing errand—to save the lost.

The Son of Man is in His Church to-day to animate her with His life, to inspire her with His spirit, so that she shall be the means by which He shall carry on and accomplish His mission. The duty of the Church to men, then, is not to educate them; is not to socially elevate them; is not to secularly better them; it is

to save them. Let men be saved, become new creatures, and they shall make for themselves new conditions; they shall seek for the higher things of intellect and life.

How grand, then, is the mission of the Church! It is the mission of the Son of Man. Not that the Church can save men—can cleanse their sins away—can elevate them to the distinction of God's children; but she can seek them and bring them to Him who has all power to save.

It is only as the Church is seen to be after lost men to save them that she appeals to men in her most attractive aspect. It is then that the Son of Man is seen in her midst as at no other time. It is then, above all other times, that she is looked upon as His incarnation, living His life. Further, the Church lives the life of the Son of Man.

3. *As she impresses His teachings on men for the guidance of their lives.* In every attitude Christ assumed towards men He showed the intense interest He had in their welfare. He would have them live noble and happy lives in the midst of earth's vicissitudes, however trying. And so He told them great facts which they were to put into their lives. 1. He told them that God is holy and that they should be holy like Him. The religion of the heathens, even the most polished, had little to do with life. Greeks and Romans might profess the religion of their fathers, and yet, like them, live like beasts. But the religion of Jesus is holy living. Thus would He have men in the character of their soul like God. 2. He told them that the true blessedness of man did not consist in what a man has,

but on what he is. He is blessed who is a peacemaker; he is blessed who is pure in heart. 3. He told them that there was a rest-centre for humanity, and that centre was Himself. Hear Him as He cries to the weary and heavy laden, "Come unto Me and rest!"

The Church lives the life of the Son of Man, shows that He is in her midst, the centre and inspiration of her life, as she reiterates His teachings by lip and life. The Church shows that the Son of Man is in her midst.

4. *By setting forth most clearly the terms of salvation which He enunciated.* His love for all men was seen in the terms on which He declared men might be saved. Might He not have made the conditions of salvation hard to be complied with? But He did not. He made them so easy that every one, be he rich or poor, sick or well, ignorant or learned, may fulfill them. It may be had without money and without price. "O how easy! He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

The Church lives the Son of Man among men, as without any qualifications she announces salvation in the terms He has laid down.

In these ways and in others we shall not now dwell upon, the Church may perpetuate the life of the Son of Man on earth. As an incarnation of Him she may manifest by life and conduct His abounding love for men, irrespective of their color or station.

But there are conclusions from what we have been saying which must not be ignored.

1. It follows from what we have been saying that the Church that shows more interest in the upper



classes of society than in the poor and the wretched does not manifest the spirit of the Son of Man. Is there such a Church? Who asks such a question? for there are so many. There are churches where the poor are not welcomed. The people of wealth, of rank, of position in society have the chief attention of some churches. In any one of these the union of a millionaire as a member would give more gladness than if twenty hardworking men would ask to be admitted to its membership. Instead of the Son of Man being in some churches of our land His frown is there, their attitude toward the poor and their obsequiousness to the rich, misrepresent His spirit and heart. This disposition against which we inveigh is in good measure responsible for the gulf that is widening between the so-called common people and the Church.

2. It follows from what we have been saying that the Church that does not show intense interest in the salvation of the lost is not manifesting the spirit of the Son of Man. It may be a comfortable society in which each rejoices in the other's fellowship. It may be liberal in its gifts to missionary and other causes, but if there is not that deep love for the souls of the sinful that shows itself in self-sacrificing effort to save them, the chief evidence of the Son of Man being in its midst, living through it, is wanting. A Church among whose members there is lacking the spirit of earnest effort to save the lost is also lacking in the chief evidence that it really cares much for Christ at all.

3. It follows from what we have been saying that that Church that does not by lip and life teach the lessons Christ taught for the uplift and comfort of

human life is not one whose life harmonizes with His. That Church whose members look upon holiness of life as the teaching of fanatics, who decry the strictures put upon pleasure seeking as out of harmony with the culture and spirit of the times; who seek for rest of mind and heart in the philosophy of men, or the temporalities of life—that Church has not in its midst the Son of Man, whatever else it may have.

4. It further follows that that Church which sets forth any other grounds upon which men may be saved than those laid down by Jesus is entirely out of harmony with His mind, and does not represent Him to men.

It is to be deplored that instead of the centre and life of all the churches being the Son of Man, the controlling spirits in many of them are sons of men, some of whom are Christless, intolerant, destructive. Money, position or social standing sometimes puts a crown of influence upon the heads of some who make their churches their kingdoms, and rule with a despotic sway where only the voice of the Son of Man should be heard.

The reason of the spiritual impotence of many of the churches of our day is the fact that the Son of Man is not seen in them. It does not appear in their conduct, whatever their preaching may be, that they are animated by His life Who is not only in the midst of the true Church which is made up of all the good, but of every church made up of His true followers. An artist who was an unbeliever made up his mind to paint a picture of Jesus. He prepared himself for his task through much study and travel. At length

he completed his task. He hung his masterpiece in his studio, and invited a little girl to see it, that he might observe the impression it made upon her. As she stood looking at it, and, seeing that she did not recognize it, he said: "That is a picture of your Jesus." "Oh, no," said she, "that is not a picture of my Jesus. My Jesus has a crown of thorns on His head, and the look of love for man in His face." As the world looks at many churches, it fails to see any striking resemblance to the Son of Man in them. Is it any wonder that great numbers of the world have no interest in churches? But let the churches of Christendom show by their life that the Son of Man is in their midst; let them expel from among them all spirit of caste and be animated by the democratic spirit of the Son of Man; let it be apparent that the salvation of lost man is their chief business and aim; let them by lip and life teach that religion is holiness; that Christly character means happiness; that Jesus Christ is the centre of rest for all weary souls; let them with all heartiness proclaim so that their voices shall girdle the globe, that the way of salvation is through faith in Christ alone; let them thus conduct themselves toward the world, and as never before, its multitudes, seeing the Son of Man—the loving, great-hearted Jesus in their midst, shall fall down before Him and worship Him.





THE HANDS OF JESUS.

"And he laid his right hand upon me."—Rev. 1:17.

## THE HANDS OF JESUS.

The hand is one of the physical features of man that distinguish him from the beast. It is that part of the human mechanism that has had much attention from the meditative, and some of them see in its structure striking evidence of the wisdom of its Maker. It is the servant of the mind and heart. It is the great utilizer of nature. But for it the rocks would remain in the hills, and the silver and gold in the secret places of the mountains. It is the hand that piles the pyramid that stands the earthquake shocks of the ages. It is the hand that builds habitations for men, whether they be hovels or palaces; and also chisels and fashions the granite into sublime temples for the worship of Deity. It is the hand that turns the wilderness into the fertile field and the desert land into landscapes covered with grass and grain. It is the hand that pens the thoughts of the philosopher, depicts on canvas the creations of the artist, writes the numbers of the poet, and thus gives to the intellect of the ages the sciences, the philosophies, and the literature, the study of which enlarges thought and elevates mind. It is the hand that makes man dominant. By it he exercises rule over the beasts of the field, and compels to his use forces of nature. How marvelous have been the achievements of the hand! What wonders it has wrought in literature, in discovery, in invention, in art! But of all the hands of men of all the ages,

however marvelous their deeds, none are so interesting to us as the hands of Jesus. In their doings we see His mind and heart. They speak of him to us as words cannot.

A writer thirty years ago thus wrote of a hand: "In the 'Way Collection' of Egyptian antiquities of the Boston Athenæum, there lies in a glass case the beautiful hand of a lady, with the gold ring glittering on the tiny finger, where it was put not less than twenty centuries ago. The mummy palm and fingers were evidently those of a woman of rank, and of delicately sympathetical form. We do not recollect to have seen a human relic of more suggestive or touching interest. We thought of the pressure of affection that hand had felt before the angels sang above the slopes of Bethlehem; of the tears it had wiped away from the lustrous eyes." Imagination truly might depict sorrows that that hand had assuaged, and deeds of heroic daring in the interest of fellow-beings. But we do not to-day contemplate a dead hand. Nineteen centuries ago it was placed on the fear-stricken Seer of Patmos, yet it is as truly a living hand this hour as it ever was. No hands were ever given to such ministries to man as were the hands of Jesus, and no subject of contemplation could be sweeter or more profitable than they. Let us think of them; they are used for us this day.

I. THEY ARE HANDS THAT KNOW WHAT TOIL MEANS. There are people who have no forgiveness for our first parents, because their sin brought labor into this world with all its woes. To them to work is the greatest of misfortunes. They do indeed look upon labor as a curse. But work is the watchword of

the universe. It is one of the greatest blessings to man. He is so circumstanced that he must work. His food and clothes and home and honest wealth come by toil. Manual labor has made a second world out of the materials of the first.

It was not beneath Jesus to toil. That hand that was placed on prostrate John was used in the workshop of the Carpenter of Nazareth. He occupied the same plane as earth's toilers. His life on this plane was in harmony with the Divine order of things. Had He appeared among men as the son of an aristocrat, thinking from his very cradle that toil was beneath man's dignity, and had gone about with an air of disdain, or even sympathy, for toilers, He would have encouraged a disposition altogether out of harmony with the Divine character and the teachings of nature. But He worked, and thus has affiliated Himself with the sons of toil. It is not menial work that earns one's daily bread.

There appeared in a shipyard in Holland a worker among the workmen. He was content to do the hardest and the rudest work so that, from beginning to ending, he might know how to build ships. Fellow-workmen were astonished at his visitors. Great men of the nations came to call on him while at his toil. Who could he be, and what his purpose? He was the Czar of all the Russias, and he was there that he might be able to teach his Russians how to build ships. Who can imagine the interest of heaven in Jesus in the carpenter's shop? Did angels stand by and watch Him use the adze, or drive the plane? Could the veil of sense have been withdrawn from the eyes of those

who toiled with Him how often would they have been overwhelmed with wonder at the glory of His visitors. But why did He toil? He was an example in all things to the race. It was, perhaps, necessary, in order to obtain a living. But the primal reason, we believe, was to get a grip on the heart and mind of earth's toiling populations in all the ages that He might better their condition, and lift them into the delights of true manhood. He toiled in the interest of others, and thus toiling He has gotten at the hearts of men as He could not otherwise have done.

II. THEY ARE HEALING HANDS. As a physician, how remarkable the place the hands of Jesus had in working cures. The very touch of His fingers was remedial. As He imposed His hand upon the afflicted the pulses of health sent their life currents through the channels in which death was working.

What scenes of the displays of His healing hand there are in His history! He had just come down from the mountain after delivering that sermon that expresses the principles of His kingdom, when He was met by a leper who cried to Him for help. Men feared contact with the leprous. They were afraid of the contagion. But Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, and he whose wont it was to cry "unclean" when approached by any one, was immediately healed by the touch.

They brought the blind to Him; He touched their eyes and they received their sight. They brought all kinds of diseased people, and He put His hand on each of them, and healed them. What marvelous scenes of healing! What joy those hands, powerful to give



health and life, brought to great numbers of hearts and homes!

The wonders wrought by the healing hands of Christ have inspired men to seek to alleviate the physical sufferings of their fellows. Those healing hands have, by their unseen touches, opened the mental eyes of men to see ways and to discover remedies by which wonders bordering on the miraculous are being wrought to-day. The spirit which animated those healing hands has entered into the hearts of men to such an extent in our times, that no age ever manifested such interest in the suffering, or did so much to alleviate their pains.

To Christ belonged the power of healing the suffering; but men could bring their fellows to Him to be cured. The world is full of people afflicted with other maladies than physical ones, maladies whose consequences are infinitely more terrible than can physical ones be. We are impotent to heal these. But we can bring them to the Great Healer. His hands were powerful to heal the leprous and the blind, they are equally powerful to-day to heal all kinds of spiritual disease. Let us try to persuade the blind, the lame, the fever-stricken, the hopeless ones in the esteem of their fellows, to come to Jesus, and a touch of His healing hand will make them all whole.

III. THEY ARE RESCUING HANDS. Impulsive Peter, when he saw Jesus walking on the sea, asked permission also to walk on it. His attempted sea-walk was useless. Faith may sometimes be experimented with to our disadvantage. It breaks down sometimes when it should not have been tried. Peter's gave way, to his great discomfiture. But Jesus heard his cry for

help when the sea threatened to engulf him, and reaching forth His hand, caught him and rescued him. How compassionate is Jesus! He sees where our faith cannot stand the strain; but when the consequences of its weakness are upon us, He does not leave us to our fate, but hastens to our rescue.

The hand of Jesus is a rescuing hand. It alone was able to reach us when we were sinking in the horrible pit and mirey clay. Earth's philosophers are feeble-handed folk when the soul is imperiled. Only Jesus can rescue us from being submerged in sin's awful waves.

But the hand of Jesus has often rescued us when it looked to us as if the waves of sorrow and affliction would overwhelm us. We have tried to keep our heads above water, as we have reasoned that affliction is the common lot of all. We have spoken sentiments to ourselves like those the poet uttered when he said:

"Be still, sad heart, and cease repining,  
Behind the clouds the sun is shining;  
Thy fate is the common fate of all;  
Into each life some rain must fall,—  
Some days must be dark and dreary."

But the strains of Longfellow have not stilled the waves of our sorrow, or helped us to keep our heads above them. It was Jesus who saved us. He reached out His kind hand and rescued us.

IV. THEY ARE HANDS THAT BLESSED THE YOUNG. You remember the scene of Jesus blessing the children. Their mothers must have considered it a great privilege to have His hand put upon their heads, for they brought them to Him for that purpose. But how small

was their conception of the virtue there was in the hands that blessed their offsprings. That event, away back there in Judea, was the beginning of a new era in the treatment of childhood. It was the beginning of Children's Day; in the light of which childhood is appreciated. It is in those lands in which is known the story of Christ putting His hands on little children, and blessing them, that we find the highest conceptions of child nature, its potentialities, and the care that should be taken of it.

What comfort the story of Christ putting His hands on the children has brought to many a parent's heart! It has put arguments into that heart that give assurance that death has done no injury to the little ones it has taken away.

How careful we should be to bring the children to Jesus that He might put His hands upon them and bless them! They are our jewels. What joy we find them! How they cheer away the care that often gathers about the heart amid the strife and worries of life!

When the lessons and tasks are all ended,

And the school for the day is dismissed,

The little ones gather around me,

To bid me good night and be kissed:

Oh, the little white arms that encircle

My neck in their tender embrace;

Oh, the smiles that are halos of heaven,

Shedding sunshine and love in my face.—*C. M. Dickenson.*

O, let us see to it that these little ones have the hands of Christ placed on them that they may grow up enjoying the blessings those hands impart.

V. THEY ARE PIERCED HANDS. Surely if any one ever had on his fingers gems sparkling with the richest

lustre, expressive of the appreciation of human hearts for his life of devotion to the interests of man, Jesus was that One. But His fingers wore no love tokens. His hands rather bore the marks of human cruelty; for men wilfully pierced them in their hate of Him. But the wounds in his hands were love tokens—they were tokens of His love for men. He suffered them to be pierced in the interest of humanity. "He was wounded for our transgression." His hands are not hence forth disabled for being thus wounded. Their loss of blood and ruptured sinews do not enfeeble them. There are no hands so mighty. The greatest work that God Himself can do for man they perform. They save—save to the uttermost. He can "lift the gates of empires from their hinges and change the course of centuries;" but He can do grander deeds with those pierced hands. He can smite off the fetters from humanity, and give liberty to the slaves of sin and hell.

The wounds in His hands are the revelation of the spirit that actuated Him. He loved man in the entirety of His nature. He could open his eyes while yet His hands were unscarred, so could He heal the sick and cleanse the leper. But man needed more done for him than the healing of his physical maladies. He needed to be healed of spiritual diseases, and to be set right with God. The hands whole were not adequate to that task. But the wounded ones are. Their scars speak of His self-sacrifice for the race. They give Jesus an attractiveness to our hearts that would be wanting without them. Who would not love Him who suffered for his good? When we get to heaven and are stand-

ing near His side, will He permit us to take His hands in ours? If so, we shall scarcely think of the mighty works they have wrought, we shall be so absorbed looking at the evidence they bear of His suffering for us.

Has it ever occurred to you to ask, why did Jesus use His hands so much in healing? Could He not by a word have cured the diseased? Yes; but He desired, more than the cure of a man's disease, to attach the man to Himself. Jesus wanted the hearts of men; and by the touch of His hand He made them feel His heart that thus He might gain theirs. Who could ever forget the pressure of the hand that drove away disease and sent the streams of health coursing through his veins?

What an experience the pressure of Christ's hand must have given! Mrs. Osgood says:

"I love a hand that meets mine own  
With grasp that causes some sensation."

What a sensation must the pressure of Christ's hand have caused! What heart there was in it! What of Divine sympathy!

When Jesus was leaving the world He stretched out His hands over His disciples and blessed them. Whatever men may say to the contrary, it is nevertheless true that it is the pierced hands of Jesus that bestow upon the earth the blessings of home, manhood, and heaven.





THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF EPHE-  
SUS—THE DECLINING CHURCH.

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil; and thou triest them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; and repent and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."—Rev. ii. 1-7.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF EPHE- SUS—THE DECLINING CHURCH.

On the banks of the Cayster, on a spot near its mouth, shaded by an undulating mountain range, settled an Ionic tribe ten centuries before the birth of Christ, and there founded the city of Ephesus. This city had a marvelous growth; it outstripped its competitors, Pergamum and Smyrna, and became famous for its splendid palaces, its great opulence, and also as the meeting place of the religions of the Orient, and the learning of the Greek. Here was the temple of Diana, which was so glorious within and without, that Philo of Byzantium declared it was the "only home of the gods." In this city were planted the seeds of the gospel; and the soil was fertile; for there grew up one of the most flourishing churches of the apostolic age. Here Paul labored for three years, preaching in the school of one Tyrannus. Here the eloquent and erudite Apollos appeared. He was a disciple of John the Baptist; but under the tuition of Aquila and Priscilla he received larger views of the truths of Jesus Christ, and went forth from thence to Corinth to preach them. Here Paul made Timothy a bishop; and here was the chief scene of the ministry of the apostle John. This was evidently a highly favored church, and from it much might be expected. But it was already smitten with decline when the letter which forms our text was written to it. Let us

look into the contents of this letter with the reverence due its divine Author, that we may see their meaning and be impressed with their lessons.

I. IT CONTAINS WORDS OF COMMENDATION. Jesus is not in the midst of the churches as a statue, the work of some genius. He is not there as a picture, before which admiring throngs stand in reverential mood. He is there as a living personality, their dominant authority, and with eye keen to see the conduct and character of every part. But though He is thus present in the churches, His eye is not so engrossed with the defects He beholds as to take no cognizance of their laudable doings. He sees their good features, as well as their bad ones, and of them speaks in the most commendable tones. Our text is an illustration of this fact. The Ephesian Church had a grave defect; but He does not speak of it before first setting forth the good points, for which He commends it. He commended it—

1. *For its activity.* Blair says, "Action is, so to speak, the genius of nature;" but it is equally the genius of Christianity. As soon as a man becomes a Christian through the regeneration of the Divine Spirit, he looks about him for work to do for his New Master. His life is not henceforth one of meditation and psalm singing; but of activity for the advance of Christ's kingdom among men, and its yet further progress in his own nature. Thus it is that Christianity is self-propagative; for it is as natural for the genuine Christian to seek the salvation of his fellows, as it is for the sun to shine.

This characteristic of the Christian life had not

departed from the Ephesian Church. It was yet very manifest in both minister and people. The exhortation of Carlos Wilcox was not needed—

“Be thy best thoughts to work divine addressed;  
Do something—do it soon—with all thy might;  
An angel's wing would droop if long at rest,  
And God Himself inactive were no longer blest;”

for this church not only worked, but *labored*. They did not go about their holy task as Christians in a half-hearted, lethargic way, as if it were of small importance whether it were done or no. But they put forth efforts that drew greatly upon their intellectual, spiritual, and physical energies. There is a difference between “work” and “labor.” The “whole-souled” manner in which they performed their work for Christ won his admiration. Intense interest in the cause of Christ manifesting itself in corresponding activity shows, 1, The noblest spirit of philanthropy; 2, A deep conviction of its divinity. Would Christ commend us for our activity should He write to us? He commended it—

2. *For its patience.* When duties are performed with the ease with which a well-practiced song is sung, patience has no function in their performance. When the track is clear there is no need of patience on the part of the engineer, so far as obstructions from other trains are concerned. So when the path of duty is free from obstructions, there is no need of patience in the pursuance of that path. But when the way of duty is full of obstacles, and any advance therein is a tedious process, then indeed is patience necessary if the work in hand shall be accomplished. The church

at Ephesus needed patience while it worked and labored. 1, It needed patience in sowing the seeds of truth. No more does the husbandman require this quality of soul than does the Christian worker. 2, It needed patience because of its surroundings. The seed of the gospel had found a kindly soil in many hearts, but the surroundings of the church were inimical to it. The city was heathen; the goddess worshipped was the most influential in all Asia. There was undoubtedly constant resistance to the spread of Christianity. Strong efforts made to prevent the people from believing on Christ. Persecution and defamation were, most likely, weapons used to defeat efforts made to lead men to believe the gospel. Whatever were the things that tried the patience of the Ephesians, it is evident from Christ's commendation of them that it stood the test. There is too little patience in the church to-day. There is not that patience that is necessary to nurse the spiritually weak; and not a few of them die because of this. There is not that patience that is necessary to bring some people to Christ; their obtuseness, their questionings, their prejudices, weary us. The sculptor works a long time at the rough slab before he brings the angel out of it. Had he only the patience of some Christians with their sinful fellow-men, he never would make the angel appear. There is needed patience to endure the gibes and taunts and criticisms of unbelieving men. There is needed patience to await the harvest time. It will come. The season may seem backward, and the prophecies of failure fill the air; but it will come: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken



it. Jesus must highly appreciate patience, for He speaks of it thrice in our text. Let us possess it. He commends this church—

3. *For its intolerance of evil.* There is an intolerance for which there should not be found a word of approval. It shows itself in self-conceit, in arrogance, pride, bigotry. It would have all pens move according to its copy, all speech governed by its syntax, all thinkers accept its creed, and all worshipers destroy their own and betake themselves to its altars only. It has resorted to the most cruel means to compel submission to its dictation. But this is not the intolerance Christ praises the Ephesian Christians for having. He could not praise such. He abhors it. The intolerance He praised was the kind that shows itself in giving no place to evil, in frowning upon it with the frown of soul hatred, in accepting of no apology for it, or under any circumstance giving it countenance. Evil is apologized for in our day. Doings of Christians that imperil their character, and ruin their influence, are defended. In making this defense, Puritanism is sneered at, and old fogysim held up to ridicule. Times have changed they say. Yes, we admit it; but God has not; nor has the standard of rectitude; nor has the disposition of the genuine Christian towards evil wherever it manifests itself. These Ephesians were intolerant of evil. This is a noble characteristic. That soul has much of heavenly dignity in it which cannot bear evil, whether it show itself in the poor man, or in the rich; in the learned or illiterate; the ruler or the ruled. Sin had rendered obtuse the spiritual sensibilities of men before Christ

came. They did the vilest, foulest deeds, and showed no conscience in their actions. Jesus Christ has given the world a true conception of sin; in regeneration a nature is imparted that is keenly sensitive to sin. And even where that nature has deteriorated, there may yet remain such high thoughts of right, and such abhorrence of wrong, as that under no circumstances can evil be tolerated. This was the case with the Ephesian Church. He commended it—

4. *For its scrutiny of ministers.* There came to them men professing to be sent to preach; but these, by a method not described, were tested by this church, and found to be false in their pretensions. It is possible that Ebion and Cerinthus may have preached in Ephesus, and are the false apostles spoken of. Perhaps they were some of their followers. That Christ commended the Ephesian Church for its scrutiny of apostles, impresses upon us the duty of scrutinizing ministers to-day. It is of vast importance to a church that its minister be of the right species. There are ministers and ministers. There are those who are called to preach the gospel, and there are those who are not, but who do it often for selfish ends. A church should be most anxious to have a God-sent man to minister to it; a man of pure character, of high tastes, of good sense, possessed of and by the truth. Those ministers who to-day preach a gospel they are entirely out of sympathy with, ought to get out of the ministry. Those ministers, and there are not a few of them, who believe not in Christ as a Divine Saviour, nor in His atonement as necessary to the salvation of men, who look upon

the Bible as a purely human production, and preach salvation, and Christ, and heaven, because they say, "We have nothing better at present to give the people," ought to be treated as false prophets. They are false to their declared convictions, and false to the people who suppose from their position and assumed earnestness, that they are, according to their profoundest belief, preaching to them the Word of the Lord. He commended it—

5. *For its attitude toward the Nicolaitans.* Who were the Nicolaitans? No one knows. As to who they were there is much conjecture. A certain Hebrew scholar says, that the word is derived from the Hebrew *nicolah*, "to eat," and that the term Nicolaitan is, therefore, a mere name of reproach, bestowed upon those wretched sensualists, who make their appetite their god, and consume their lives in making "provision for lusts of the flesh." Others think they were the Antinomians of the Asiatic Church—"persons who taught that the conduct is immaterial if the faith be right." This belief made the way easy to the most damnable conduct, the most beastly living. This is the most likely view of these people. Did they not deserve to be loathed? Don't pray for God to take hate out of your nature. It is there by His gift, and has a noble sphere of activity. It should be manifested against wrong-doing. Its fires should never be quenched against it. Christ commended the wrath of the Ephesians against the Nicolaitans; for He Himself hated them. Let this hate ever burn in our souls against all those errors that imperil men. Of what use is a right creed without corresponding conduct?

Though he be orthodox as the very angels are, there is no place in the universe but hell for him whose heart is not right with God. He commends it—

6. *For being inspired to labor by His name.* How mighty has ever been the name of Jesus to inspire the Christian to unflagging toil!

THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF EPHE-  
SUS—THE DECLINING CHURCH.

PART SECOND.



## THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF EPHE- SUS—THE DECLINING CHURCH.

II. HERE WE HAVE WORDS OF BLAME. Jesus would delight to keep on saying laudatory things about this church if He could. As the reader of this epistle kept on reading it before this church, what a chill must have been experienced as he passed from words of commendation, which must have delighted them, to utter in grave accents: "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." The "first love," how delightful it was to us! Sweet, pure, self-sacrificing. It showed itself in appreciation of His people, in attendance on His house, in giving to support His cause, in willingness to do anything for Him. It was a love we had never experienced before. It made everything new about us. Jesus was no longer a mere name of Bible story; He was a real, precious, personal Saviour, at whose feet our hearts poured out all their treasures. We can't describe it; it made paradise within. These Ephesians had experienced it; but Christ is obliged to make the grave charge against them of having left that love. Four things may be said about this conduct:

1. *It was painful to Christ.* How it pains the parent to see evidences of waning affection in the child. What anguish fills the wife's heart to see evidences that he whom she loves, and who said he would love her until death, is losing his affection for her? But

what parent loves like Christ? What wife so affectionate as Jesus? Does He not with greater longing than a wife's for her husband's, desire our love? O how it must pain Him to see it wane!

2. *Nothing could offset it.* What to a loving mother could compensate for the waning affection of her child? What to a fond wife could offset the declining affection of her husband? Could fine dresses, opportunity of travel, abundance of money? These things would have no value in the place of her husband's heart. Nor is there anything that can take the place of love for Christ with Him. Men may praise Him, paint His pictures, chant His name, defend His cause, give large money to extend His kingdom, but nothing can satisfy Him without the heart be given. Nothing will Christ accept as a substitute for our love, however men may value and praise that thing.

3. *It is ruinous.* He who has left his first love has taken a long stride in the direction of arresting the development of his manhood, and rendering himself valueless according to the appraisement of heaven. Love for Christ is the Christian's highest life. He who has it not, cannot grow. Love for Christ gives value to life's deeds; he who has it not, is nothing, though he be learned, and eloquent, rich, and munificent in his givings to the poor. The true progress of being is endangered when our love for Christ begins to fall in its temperature.

4. *It is inexcusable.* Decay is the natural order of things in the material universe. That it is a law that life's forces exhaust themselves, appears to be true.

The death of men and trees is expected. But decline in affection for Christ is contrary to the divine law and order. There are many things and circumstances that tend to chill that love. But His claims on our heart's affections are infinitely greater than those of any other being, or any thing. Christ is in such a relation to the soul as Creator and Saviour, that there will ever exist infinite reasons for the soul manifesting its warmest love for Him. No man will ever be able to give a good reason for waning in his love for Christ.

Our reasoning on this point may cause gloomy thoughts to arise in the hearts of some of Christ's truest disciples. They may say, we must be of those who have forsaken their first love, for we do not now feel as we did when we became Christians. We have not that delightful experience of affection for Christ we then had. But, there may be absent that experience peculiar to the beginning of the Christian life, and yet, instead of declining love, a deeper affection possessed. In the experience of him who has been married for years, there may be apparently absent those fond feelings that so strikingly showed themselves in the days when he was a bridegroom. But does this absence prove a decline of affection for her whom he then fondly called his bride? Touch her with the word that would tarnish her, lay upon her the finger that would hurt her, and there will spring up in his soul as if from the couch of slumber, a giant instead of an infant, affection, that will defend even to the death her whom with heart accents he calls his wife. So with the Christian. He may not have

the *feelings* he had when first he knew the Lord; but deep in his soul is there a love for Him, greater and grander than that that delighted him in the beginning of his Christian career. The experience was new at the beginning. That that gave the experience has become the life of the soul.

But it may easily be discovered that a man has left his first love. 1. *His love for the personal Christ has declined.* He may admire Him, believe in the Bible's teachings about Him; but fail to love Him. 2. *Love for Christ is not the inspiration of his Christian activities.* Reasons for his activities, his labors even, may be found in other directions than in love for Christ. If Christ were to write to our church what would He say about its love?

III. HERE ARE WORDS OF COUNSEL. For a church to decline in love to Christ is to fall. We read of the fall of Adam and Eve in Old Testament story, we read in our text of a fallen church. That this was the state of the Ephesian Church suggests three remarks: 1. *It was not where it used to be.* It used to be high up in rich experience; in the favor of Christ; in holy power and influence; but it was not so high now. It was fallen. 2. *It was where it ought not to continue.* The supreme thought of the fallen is to get up. So should it have been with this church. 3. *It was where it need not continue.* It was possible for it to get up again. There is a divine method of restoring such. It is here set forth. 1. "Remember whence thou art fallen." Intellect has a place in this work of restoration. Let memory go back over the religious history of the past. Visit, in thought, the old situa-

tion of the soul, when it was so near Christ, and enjoyed so much of His presence. Contrast with that the present situation, and how sad the state will appear. The poet must have had this experience who sang—

“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void,  
The world can never fill.”

This going back of memory takes us amid the tender, happy scenes of other days, and creates a desire for their return. 2. *Repent.* There is a way to repent. Let a back-slidden Christian think of what he was and what he might now be; let him think of his treatment of his Lord, and there will, through the operations of the Divine Spirit in connection with his thinking, be produced that change in his heart implied in repentance. His great purpose will be to love and serve Christ. 3. *Start anew.* Do first works over again. O what awful loss of time these soul declensions in love cause! You may stop the building of a house, or the painting of a picture for weeks or months, and then begin where you left off; but you cannot do that in the religious life. Every time you stop you have to start anew. Begin where you began at first, get again the old, sweet feeling, seek to possess again the old ardor for Christ and His cause; let the happy scenes of the day of your conversion to God be enacted over again. If churches would get back to their old power and experience, they should bow at God's altar, and ask over again for a new heart.

IV. IT CONTAINS WORDS OF WARNING. Where decay has set in it will spread, unless arrested. It is so

with a church. A declining church is inimical to Christ's argument for Himself, and will not be endured by Him. Christ won't tolerate death within the domain of His kingdom. He will remove the dead or dying thing. His warning words to this church declare: 1. *That a declining church is a subject of retribution.* Churches are rewarded or punished here according to their love for Christ. 2. *That Jesus administers this retribution.* He does not come on the same errand always to churches. As to individual men He will come after awhile as Judge, rather than Saviour; so to churches will He come as Judge, rather than Saviour. He is in many churches now as the hearer of prayer, and the source of their prosperity; but He is on a visit of punishment to others. 3. *That his retribution may be extinction.* Should He withhold the influences of the Holy Spirit from a church it is doomed. 4. *That that retribution may be quickly effected.* 5. *That repentance is the only hope of a declining church.*

V. IT CONTAINS WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. The great end of Christ in His counsels and threatenings, is to lead the fallen to arise, and regain their lost condition. To this end also the Spirit speaks words of inspiring encouragement. These words impress upon us: 1. *That to retain that love for Christ that ever grows, enemies must be contended with.* 2. *These enemies may be overcome.* It is possible to retain the deepest love for Christ, while principalities and powers, heights and depths, zealously seek to despoil us of it. The deeper our love the easier the conquest over our foes. 3. *Victory over these foes is followed by the*

*highest blessings.* (a) Appetite for highest things. (b) Satisfaction of that appetite from the tree of life in the paradise of God. The man whose heart is faithful to Christ notwithstanding all the assaults of his foes, has the appetite of angels rather than that of beasts, and has the products of God's planting to feast on, rather than the things that please swinish tastes. The conqueror will get back into God's paradise, from which there will be no expulsion, and near to the tree of life, on which he may feast forever.

4. *These words of encouragement are for all conquerors.* Not to Ephesus only, but to the *churches* were they spoken.





PARADISE.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."—Rev. 2:7.

## PARADISE.

1. *The Christian life is one of conflict.* At conversion a man is turned into a fighter. But it is not with men he fights. It is against old friends who up till now have had the mastery over his spirit, and have made him their slave. His conflict is with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

2. *In this conflict the Christian is expected to win.* Mighty as are his foes, he may yet be mightier. They are all conquerable by him. Numbers have overcome their foes through the blood of the Lamb; and what these have done all may do.

3. *He who overcomes in this strife has the grandest promise.* Christ will give him to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. But it is not to dwell upon the victorious Christian, or the tree whose fruit Christ shall give him to eat as his reward. It is upon the paradise where the tree of life grows we wish to centre our thoughts. Doing so we observe—

I. THAT IT IS A REAL PLACE. Heaven is a state of being. Character is the dwelling place of the soul. A Christly character is a divine residence, even though its possessor dwells amid the icebergs of the frozen zone. But it is also a place. The paradise formed by God in the country of Eden for the first man was no more surely a place than is the paradise that is for the good

beyond this life. It is spoken of as a reality. And, must we not think it is a place, since Jesus is there? He did not leave His body behind Him on leaving earth, neither did Elijah, nor Enoch.

Paradise as a place has greater attraction for our mind than if it were a mere state of the soul. It is a real place suited to the soul's most exalted state. While it is within man that his heaven is to be found, yet his surroundings may minister much to his pleasure. The Christian whose home is amid the beautiful scenes of nature, into whose ears pour the notes of nature's sweetest singers, has pleasures added to the delights of the heaven within him that he has not who, though possessed of the same heavenly soul-state, is situated amid scenes that are unattractive, where the voices of nature's choirs are never heard.

The descriptions given us of the future abode of the good in the only source of our information on the subject, the Word of God, impress us that that abode is a veritable place; that it is the abode of Jesus, the angels, and the redeemed.

II. ITS LOCATION IS NOT KNOWN. How divers are the views of men as to the location of Paradise, the first home of man on earth! It has recently been argued that not in the region of Euphrates, nor in Armenia, nor in Cashmere, nor in Circassia; but in the region of the North Pole, was man's Edenic home. Nor can we tell where Paradise, the home of the good beyond this life, is. The "Father's house" is somewhere. The "Paradise of God" is somewhere; but where no one among men knows. The inclination of certain planets toward a certain part of the heavens led astronomers

to think that there was an orb in that region which they had not yet discovered. They continued their exploration of the field of this disturbance, and were rewarded for their labors by finding a new world, the planet Uranus. The hearts of men have been attracted by something outside the orbit of earth; another world has been strongly drawing them towards it; but they have not yet found that world. Perhaps it is the great centre around which revolve all the worlds and systems of the universe.

III. THAT IT IS A PLACE OF GREAT BEAUTY. Paradise, which God planted eastward in Eden, was, undoubtedly, a place of great beauty. Earth's scenes, while as yet the curse of sin had not fallen on them, were, doubtless, beautiful; but this was a peculiarly attractive place; God spent special care upon it. Rivers, and trees, and flowers, are objects of beauty. What a scene Eden must have been with its rivers, trees, and flowers!

But if God made a place so beautiful for man in the infancy of his being; when as yet the avenues of his nature had been but little traversed by thought or impression, what must be the beauty of that place which God has prepared for Himself, and the angels, and all whom He may choose to dwell with Him!

IV. THAT IT IS A PLACE OF PERFECT HAPPINESS. There are few, if any, perfectly happy people here. There is an element of bitterness in the sweetest cup. There are physical infirmities, moral defections, or weaknesses, conditions that seem adverse; all of which mar earth's pleasure. The wells of delight men dig for themselves are dug with the prospect of leaving them,

and the fortunes and palaces they construct are built with the grave in sight.

It is not to be doubted that the causes of earth's unhappiness might be overcome through faith in Jesus. The Christian is expected to gain this victory; but quite often he is subject to those happiness-destroying agencies, and wears on his countenance a sadness that his Lord forbids.

But in the Paradise of God there is perfect happiness. There is the absence of all causes of unhappiness. There is no sin there. There is not a guilty soul beneath its heavens. There exists no reason for temporal anxiety. How many things here conspire to cause this state of mind. There is no lack of reciprocity of affection. This is a cause of much of earth's infelicity. There is no death there. What heart-breaks it causes here! There is there every condition necessary to the happiness of the loftiest beings. As Alpine summits often rise far above the battling elements that thunder down their slopes and terrify the valleys, so is the Paradise of God removed from all scenes of sadness, and all circumstances that would mar its glory, or in the least spoil its delight. There shines the perpetual sun of bliss, nor does a cloud ever obscure the brightness of its countenance.

V. THAT IT IS ACCESSIBLE BY MAN. This gives paradise the interest to us that we feel in it. If it were a place prepared by God for other beings than us, and if from it we were debarred, what attraction would it have for us? But not only may we enter that place of bliss, and there abide; but great numbers of our kind are already there. During the ages before the

angels sang the natal song of the world's Saviour, vast multitudes had gone thitherward through His merits. What bliss is theirs! and what the bliss of all who since have joined them! These have gained a paradise infinitely grander than that from which man's sin expelled him.

The glory of this abode transcends all imaginings. It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive it. Blessed thought, vast multitudes of the human race who suffered the pains and sorrows that have attended the expulsion from earth's Eden, are now enjoying the bliss of the paradise of God! They commune with God face to face. They sorrow no more. In no eye does a tear ever glisten. The hand of God has wiped away all tears from their eyes.

VII. THERE IS NO FEAR OF EXPULSION THEREFROM. Man may eat of all the trees of this garden. His blessedness cannot be imperiled. His probation is over. O what a prospect awaits the servant of Christ!

"Rest comes at length, though life be long and dreary;

The day must dawn, and darksome night be past;  
All journeys end in welcome to the weary,

And heaven, the heart's true home, will come at last.  
Angels sing on! your faithful watches keeping;

Sing us sweet fragments of the song above;  
'Till morning's joy shall end the night of weeping,  
And life's long shadow break in cloudless love."

—*Faber.*





THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA  
—THE SUFFERING CHURCH.

“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”—  
Rev. ii. 8-11.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA —THE SUFFERING CHURCH.

Smyrna is one of the chief cities of Asia Minor. It is situated at the head of a deep bay which forms one of the finest harbors, easy of access, and affording good anchorage. Because of its situation, it could hardly fail to be what it is, the emporium of the trade of the Levant. It was much honored by Rome; for besides the bestowment of special privileges for the part it took against Mithridates, the King of Pontus, when eleven cities competed for the honor of erecting a temple to Tiberius, the Senate decided in favor of Smyrna. It was conquered by Alyattes, the Syrian king, and destroyed; but it was rebuilt by Antigonos and Lysimachus, and became the most beautiful city of Asia. It was noted for the elegance and arrangement of its streets, its gymnasium, and its temple to Homer. It claimed to be the birthplace of Greece's blind singer. It is a large city to-day, having a population of 200,000. As to who laid the foundation of the Christian Church in this place, there is no positive information. There is much conjecture. Paul during his stay in Ephesus perhaps preached here, or some of his associates. But it is not improbable that Christianity was brought here by Christians from Ephesus, or elsewhere, whose business called them hither. By whomsoever this church was founded, it retained for centuries its original splendor; and at this present

time Smyrna is the most Christian city in the Turkish Empire. There are good reasons for believing that Polycarp was the bishop of this place at the time this epistle was written, and that he was the "angel" to whom it was addressed. Several points of this epistle to the Church at Smyrna claim our most thoughtful attention.

I. THE DESCRIPTION CHRIST GIVES OF HIMSELF IN IT. He is the First and the Last, He that liveth and was dead: so He speaks of Himself. Then He was before all things—before ever an angel stood in the presence of the throne, or seraph waited upon the command of God. And when men shall have gone from earth, and the shining myriads of the midnight shall have sunken into the darkness of oblivion, and the earth shall have disappeared, He shall still be. Then He is more than human. He is Jehovah, the Eternal One. Were He not thus august in nature, the grandest specimens of humanity, the most Godlike of people would be the creations of the greatest of impostors. But that He is divine is not all He here says of Himself: He says He was dead. This is a marvelous statement for the Eternal to make of Himself. Yet it is that truth of history out of which as a fountain, flows the river of salvation, in which the foulest may wash and be clean. He says He is alive again. This is the sun truth; from its glory the great truths of the gospel receive their brilliancy. In them without it there would be no light for human hearts.

This representation served to impress this church with 1. *The greatness of Him to whom they had devoted themselves.* Smyrna had a god as had other

cities. His name was Dionysus; he was the god of wine; he represented the intoxicating elements of nature, and was considered the promoter of peace and civilization. He was said to have died and been resurrected. What a contrast the Christian's God would bear to this mythological deity, whom the idolatrous Smyrnaens worshiped! His was before all gods, and before all nature; and would be after all. He really died and was resurrected; of which facts they had indisputable evidence. 2. *It would bring afresh to their thoughts His sufferings, and the conduct of men toward Him.* As they would read, or hear read, Christ's description of Himself, they would think with tenderness of the awful conduct of men toward Him and of His painful agony on the cross. 3. *It would anew arouse refreshing thoughts of His victory over His foes and death.* For since He thus triumphed He was able to make them victorious. 4. *It would prepare their minds to receive whatever He might say to them.* Whatever that might be, it would be the utterance of God. This description which Christ gives of Himself in the opening words of this letter, was exactly suited to this church. It was a suffering Church; and it was most suitable that it should be led to feel, if possible, more strongly than ever, that He, for attachment to Whom they were suffering, was worthy of the most heroic affection. The next point in this letter is

II. CHRIST'S ASSERTION OF HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS CHURCH. "I know thy works," etc. 1. As the divine former of all things, it was Jesus Christ who bent the peninsula out of which He formed the bay at the head of which

Smyrna stands. But He never in the days of His flesh set His foot there. It was not within the scope of His itinerancy. How then knew He the works of these Christians? When He was about to leave earth His disciples were heartbroken at the thought of His leaving them; but little did they think that His departure from earth meant His presence everywhere among His people. He came to Smyrna by way of heaven, and was fully cognizant of all his followers did for Him.

There was no work done for Him that He observes not. He is so near when the cup of cold water is given in His name to a disciple that He declares it is given to Him. This Master's eye is all the while and everywhere on His servants. 2. *He knew their "tribulation."* This word comes from *tribulum*, a threshing instrument, and is very expressive of the fearful sufferings which Christians in Smyrna, and in other parts of Asia, suffered. They were considered the enemies of the gods, and the cause of all public calamities, and hence they were abhorred by the pagans, and subjected to the most fearful tortures, and death. The story of Polycarp, who was burned in Smyrna, is an exceedingly touching one. Christ knew the sufferings of His people there. 3. *He knew their poverty.* The members of this church would surely be very unpopular in rich and flourishing Smyrna. They would be despised by the wealthy and aristocratic. The poverty of some was, perhaps, because of their religion. The true order of things is reversed under the rule of sin. When Jesus shall have universal dominion, prosperity and religion will be associated. Where Chris-

tians were so detested, it did not require long time for one who had been a prosperous business man, through the boycott, to be reduced in his circumstances. It meant much every way to be a Christian in those days! Many are the poor in the ranks of Christ's followers to-day. He knows them every one. He has many poor churches; He sympathizes with them. Poverty may be a blessing; but so may be a whipping. Christ knows the poor of a church; and He knows those who lie when they say they are poor, to escape contributing according to their ability to His cause. 4. *He knew how they were slandered.* The word "blasphemy" here probably means calumnies, defamatory accusations. There were people at Smyrna who professed Judaism, and had a synagogue there. These asserted that they were the people of God, and vilified all who refused to think as they did. It is not unlikely that they were of the same class as the Nicolaitanes, whom Christ hated. These people thought they were the synagogue of the Lord; but instead they were the "synagogue of Satan." The devil may have his church, and keep it popular by calling it by a divine name. It is a noticeable fact that Christ has suffered more from the enmity of men professing to worship God, than from paganism. The Jews have ever hated Christ. They crucified Him; and when His servant, Polycarp, was to be martyred, numbers of them were present, and helped to collect material to burn him. These so-called Jews in Smyrna, were great troublers of the Church; but Christ knew all they said against His followers, and

taking it as said against Himself, He terms it blasphemy. Another point in this letter is—

III. THE INFORMATION AS TO FUTURE AFFLICTION CHRIST IMPARTED TO HIS CHURCH. The storm had already broken upon them, dark were the heavens, and fierce the lightnings, but Christ informed them that it would increase in fury. There are no surprises to Christ in the doings of His foes against His Church. He knows all about them. Some of the prophecies would fail if the Church did not suffer. But knowing the heart and intents of her enemies, Christ is able to forestall all their machinations, by putting the Church on her guard, and strengthening her for the trying time.

Four things are to be noted concerning the afflictions that were yet to come to this Church. 1. *Their nature.* They were to be cast into prison. That was to befall them which has happened to many of Christ's followers since for their loyalty to Him. 2. *Their agent.* Who would bring about the incarceration of Christ's servants? Who has ever brought their imprisonment and torture about? Right names should be used when answering these questions. Bigotry is said to have done it; fidelity to religion others say, has led to it. But the correct answer is: the devil. He has ever been the instigator of such conduct towards Christ's followers. It was the devil who kindled the fires of bigotry in the souls of men, which fires kindled the faggots that consumed the martyrs for Christ. One of the times when the bells of hell ring for joy, is when Satan has governments set against religion, and ecclesiastics burning men for their faith in Jesus.



The devil could accomplish very little in earth if it were not for men. They do his mean work, for he has given them a taste for it. He is often mistaken for a man. Indeed this is one of the most serious of blunders. Dressed in certain garbs he has before now been taken for an ecclesiastic. O if Satan would only some day forget himself, and appear so palpably in all his agencies that all eyes might see him, would not men give new names to certain individuals, and seek as never before to put an end to their operations?

3. *Their duration.* Ten days. The length of the time here implied we know not. Some think the ten persecutions are referred to; some the ten years of persecution under Diocletian; some think a long period is meant, and some a short. But whatever be the length of time implied, there was to come an end to their sufferings. God will not allow His people to be forever in the hand of the enemy. He has command of the human world, and in His own good time will hush every tempest of opposition to His children, and flood their hearts with the sunshine of liberty and joy. 4. *Their design.* "That ye may be tried." The devil tries Christians not to discover how strong they are, but how weak, that he may overthrow them. To discover by his destructive processes that a soul is so strongly attached to Jesus Christ that he can make no impression upon it, must cause him great chagrin. God allows souls to be tested that they may become stronger. The trials of Satan are as storms which God allows to howl around His children as the oaks and cedars of His planting, that men and angels and devils may see the strength of their rootage in

Him. The enemy may think that he is giving the cause of Christ a rough time; but the efforts he is using to accomplish that end, are being overruled by God to develop the objects he seeks to destroy into the grandest men and women. Another point in this letter is—

IV. CHRIST'S HIGH ESTEEM OF THIS CHURCH. He utters not a word against it. Had there been faults in it, would He not have spoken of them? But His eye of flame saw nothing amiss. He the rather saw reason for praise; for He esteemed them rich. There is richness of nature, there is wealth of possession. A man may be rich in himself, and poor in his holdings. Men may amass large fortunes, and as their thousands are growing, they themselves may be diminishing. This church had soul wealth; about which some things may be said. 1. *The enmity of men cannot prevent its getting.* Though the people of Smyrna should conspire to give no patronage to the business of Christians, or occupation either, yet such conspiracy could not hinder them from obtaining this wealth of soul. Earth may conspire against men to hurt their earthly business; but it cannot affect their transactions with the skies. They carry them on in their hearts, and on their knees. No storms can affect their ships of commerce, nor conspiracies bring about bad times for them. 2. *It is in its nature a blessing.* This cannot be said of temporal wealth. It is sometimes a great curse. When nations become wealthy they often lose their sturdiness, their courage and strength, and become weak and effeminate, easy prey for their foes. So often does it happen

that the increase of a Christian's wealth, or a church's, is attended by the loss of that sturdy, manly, religious spirit that had been apparent, and worldliness and love of ease appear instead. Knowing the possible influence of secular wealth on the Church, it was no wonder John Wesley feared for the Methodist Church ever becoming wealthy. But the wealth the Christians at Smyrna had was ever a blessing, and could be nothing else. This wealth and secular riches must go together, if the latter hurt not its owner. Both together may work mighty things. 3. *It can not be taken from its possessor.* In the days of Tiberius it frequently happened that a rich man was tortured till he named some friend of the Emperor his heir, and then was executed that the inheritance might be possessed. It was not unusual for Tiberius to create himself, by an act of the Senate, a rich man's nearest relative, and then hasten his death that he might possess his riches. But no power in the universe could rob this church of its wealth. No power can deprive of soul riches. They are inseparable from their possessor. He takes them with him through the gates of death. Heaven's millionaires, many of them, were very poor people when on earth. 4. *It makes its possessors grandly influential.* It gave the Christians in Smyrna grander influence than money could give: it gave them influence over souls: it drew men to them, and to Christ. The Godly lives of the early Christians, which Gibbon says were so influential, exhibited this wealth. Heart riches give their possessors influence in the court of heaven. To hold fellowship with such the Trinity

come to their earthly homes. 5. *It is the standard according to which Christ judges a church's wealth.* A church may have abundance of gold and silver, and yet be abjectly poor; while on the other hand a church may have no such riches, and yet be wealthy. Christ judges by the contents of the treasury of the heart. Men are proud to tell you they belong to a church of great financial ability; but Jesus Christ's delight is in the church of great heart wealth. Another point in this letter is—

V. THE DUTIES ENJOINED BY CHRIST ON HIS CHURCH. 1. *They were to fear not.* He did not want them to stand with souls unnerved in the presence of the enemy. Fear takes all the strength out of men. It is the characteristic of the coward. Christians, in the face of the storms of opposition which may howl against them, should be like the rocks in the sea that lift their heads high above its waters, unmoved by the fury of any tempest. 2. *They were to be faithful.* He confided in them. O does Christ put any confidence in any of mankind! He does; let us not betray it. They were to be faithful to Him, to truth, to men, to themselves, though they had so much to oppose and dishearten them. A cousin of Mahomet, captured by the Romans, would not take pork and wine offered him by his captors, though he had had nothing to eat for three days, such was his fidelity to principle. 3. *They were to be faithful unto death.* No trial, not even threatened death, should make them false to Him. The need of our times is constancy in Christians. The soldiers Christ wants are those who will die rather than surrender. That one who chooses to

part with life rather than allegiance to Jesus, is the hero angels talk about. Be faithful; no opposition, no circumstance, can justify a halt in fidelity to Christ. 4. *He also enjoined earnest attention to what He has written.* "He that hath an ear," etc. From addressing the Church He addresses the individual. All that He has said to the Church, He has said to its individual members. The last point in this letter is

VI. THE PROMISE CHRIST MAKES TO THIS CHURCH OF REWARDS FOR FIDELITY. 1. They were not to be affected by the "second death." They would be subjected to the death of the body. Perhaps that might come to them in cruel fashion; but the second death, that of the soul, could have no power over them. 2. They were to be crowned with life. They were to have the most dignified, royal kind of life, and that eternally. A crown of life bestowed implies of glory far more than angel tongue can tell. And they would get this crown, for the Divine Christ had promised it.



PERSONAL FAITHFULNESS TO CHRIST.

"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10.



## PERSONAL FAITHFULNESS TO CHRIST.

The book of nature teaches us great things about God. It speaks of His power and His wisdom, of His Omniscience and Omnipotence. The Scriptures corroborate the teachings of nature, and give many marvelous facts illustrative of their truthfulness. But it is not as the doer of mighty works that God attracts the hearts of men. It is not as the former of suns and systems, the stiller of tempests, or the maker of highways through the depths of the sea that God draws hearts towards Him. But it is as He shows Himself interested in men's earthly conditions; as He manifests tenderness and sympathy for them in the trying places of life. And how great is the care God has for man. How well He is acquainted with all his circumstances. Read the letter to the church at Smyrna; for therein He appears in such a heart-winning aspect as nature nowhere presents Him. There He appears as fully acquainted with the suffering and poverty of His children, as knowing well what they would yet have to endure for Him, of persecution and imprisonment; but He also appears as the kind Counsellor in their painful circumstances, encouraging them to unswerving fidelity. When God thus comes into the lives of men, and talks in such tender and touching tones, He gets a hold on their minds and hearts such as He never could get by the manifestation of His power in creation, or the display of His wisdom in marshaling the galaxies

of space. Our subject is personal fidelity to Jesus Christ. In dwelling on it we remark—

I. THAT CHRISTIANS ARE IN A VARIETY OF RELATIONSHIPS TO JESUS CHRIST. All men are related to Jesus. They are all His creatures; they are all under His government; they are all objects of His providential regard. But Christians are related to Him as they who are not Christians, are not. They hold to Him the relation—

1. *Of Workmanship to the Worker.* When people become Christians a great change takes place in them. They are not what they formerly were. They have new life that shows itself in new conduct. Their dispositions are new; the appetites that care for the nourishment of the body; the passions—those motive forces that propel men and do much to move the world; the emotions; the sentiments—all these are under new control, and together form in them new dispositions. They are new creatures; they have new aspirations, and are in new attitudes towards their fellow men.

Now this change has not taken place through the operation of natural law. The Christian is not an evolution from a lower to higher condition. He is a work—the work of a mighty Worker. Jesus Christ by His Spirit has made him what he is. He is Christ's workmanship; and as such do all real Christians appear before earth and heaven. They hold to Him the relation

2. *Of Subjects to Their Ruler.* All things were made to be ruled. But it was ever intended that the superior should govern the inferior. The snail was

never intended to be the master of the lion; nor was it ever intended that sin should have dominion over man. Heaven's purposes regarding man have, however, been thwarted, for that that is infinitely degrading to him has become the sovereign of vast numbers of the race. This accounts for the degradation of men. This sovereign has drawn his subjects towards him, as all sovereigns in some measure do their subjects.

But in Christians this state of things does not now exist. Satan has been cast out of their hearts. Sin has no more dominion; Jesus has taken possession of the throne of their being. It was a glorious time when the old government was broken up, when the soul, and body, and mind, with all their powers, submitted to the new King.

How beautiful would human character be if man had ever lived in harmony with the Divine laws. But under the Sovereignty of Jesus may not men have characters at least equally as beautiful, notwithstanding the fall? There enter such elements into the character of His subjects as make it at least as beautiful. He enjoins on all who bow to His sceptre the largest forgiveness of enemies; the doing of good for evil—acts towards our fellows that could never have been required, if man had ever been obedient to his Maker.

3. *Of Co-workers.* Jesus has taken men into partnership with Himself in saving the world. He has made men His visible instrumentality. This is great honor; but it means vast responsibility. The uplift of men from their low condition is, so far as the visible means are concerned, the work of Christian men. That the work that Christ has undertaken advance rapidly,

depends on His co-workers. Christians hold to Christ the relation—

4. *Of Soldiers to their Sovereign.* Their conversion initiated them into the army of Jesus. They wear the regimentals of His soldiers. They are ever in active service; for there is always war. They have then no dress parades; there are no pensioners; for there are no disabled soldiers in this army, and the time of service is until death. Christians hold the relation to Jesus—

5. *Of Friends to Friend.* What a wonder of love that God's Son should make friends of men! Enough to be honored with being His servants, doing His bidding; but to be made His friends, is one of the wonders of His love. And His friendship is not a merely nominal thing. It is not a sort of honor He has conferred upon us to speak of Him as a friend of ours while from Him the real heart of friendship is absent. His friendship is genuine. It means all that heart and mind can put into it. And He means that our friendship for Him shall have all the heart and life features that His has for us. O, what a friend is Jesus! In all life's circumstances, how true! But now let us remark—

II. THAT IT IS THE BOUNDEN DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO BE FAITHFUL TO CHRIST IN ALL THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO HIM. They should be ever careful to rightly represent His workmanship. The church is as an exhibition where the work of Divine grace is to be seen, as the exhibition is the place where the work of genius is for inspection. To be faithful to Jesus is to show in the life what grand work Christ can perform

in a human soul. To be unfaithful is to misrepresent His ability, and make Him unattractive to the heart. They should ever be faithful to Him as His subjects, and in their walk among men let it be seen that they are governed by His principles. They should ever exhibit a royalty of character that is worthy of children of the King of kings; for all the subjects of Jesus' rule, are kings and queens. They should ever be faithful to Him as true friends are to each other; and under all circumstances show delight in their relationship. They should ever be loyal as soldiers of His kingdom, ready to take up arms to defend Him and His cause. They should be thus faithful unto death; not only to the end of life; but at the cost of life for His sake. They should die for Him, if necessary. They should be thus faithful—

1. *Because He has made such relationships possible.* We are not born in these relations to Christ. A great work must be done in us before such relations can be enjoyed. This work has been made possible by Jesus.

2. *Because He is depending on His followers to maintain these relationships.* He expects them to live His life among men, that they may attract men towards Him. He expects them to stand up for His defense. He expects them to work for Him, that His kingdom may extend among men. Christians are in His stead here, and He expects them to act as He would.

3. *Because of their own good.* There is no true success in life where there is lack of fidelity to Jesus Christ. What is failure in business compared to failure here? We lose what we have won by failing to be faithful.

4. *Because of their fellows' good.* He who is true to Jesus exercises a more potent influence for good over those that behold him than the eloquence of the orator over those who sit spellbound under him. An Indian came to a missionary to enquire about Christ. "Where did you hear about Him," said the missionary. "No one ever told me about Him," said the man, "but I have seen Him lived by my neighbor." The life that is true to Jesus is an argument for His religion that stops the mouths of cavilers. He who is thus true is the best practical friend sinners have.

III. THERE EXIST REASONS FOR EXHORTATION TO FAITHFULNESS. Reasons existed in the case of the Church at Smyrna. Its members had suffered, and would suffer; their fidelity to Christ had been tried; it would yet be tried. They needed exhortation and encouragement. There are reasons for the exhortations of the text to be spoken to churches to-day. Some of these reasons are—

1. *The close contact of Christians with worldly things.* Becoming Christians does not remove us from earthly things, making us independent of them. We are still in the flesh, and must attend to physical requirements. There is a danger of becoming so absorbed by this attention as to neglect our duty to Christ and our higher selves.

2. *The demands of domestic and social life.* The cares of home—provisions for the family. These engross thought, and often tend to disturb and burden the soul. There is danger of irritability, of attempting single-handedly to cope with our situation, of forgetting who we are, and where our real help lies. The

demands of society show its materialistic tastes and tendencies; and there exists the danger of becoming so influenced by it as to be smitten with its tastes, and injured by its tendencies. How much is needed the exhortation to faithfulness in view of the cares and burdens and responsibilities of domestic life, and also because of the materialistic, and atheistical trend of the thought and life of society!

3. *The love of ease.* This has ever been condemned in good men. It is hurtful to piety. It misrepresents the spirit of Christ, and keeps back His work of saving men. He cannot be true to his Lord who while he may sing, and pray, and shout hallelujahs, does nothing else for His Kingdom.

4. *Intellectual difficulties.* These arise. The atmosphere is impregnated with doubts. But the best solution of them all is found in faithfulness to Jesus. He who does His will, will know of the doctrine whether it be divine or not.

5. *Difficulties that arise from opposition.* As already intimated such gave rise to the exhortation of our text to the Christians at Smyrna. Persecution has the tendency to lead to surrender to the foe. But when tried then is the time to show the spirit of heroism for our Lord. He is worthy of our boldest and most self-sacrificing fidelity.

IV. THERE IS PROMISED BY CHRIST A GLORIOUS REWARD TO THE FAITHFUL. Christ will not suffer His followers to lose anything through their fidelity to Him. Let their enemies do their very worst against them and they shall only hasten their coronation. Be thou faithful, says Jesus, and I will give thee a crown

of life. Glorious promise! Life is made royal by being spent for Him. He has a larger and grander life here who is true to Jesus Christ. But the sublimest things are yet subjects of promise. What does a crown of life mean? O come from the climes of day some one of the wearers of such a crown, and tell us what glories it implies! If faithful we shall *surely* wear one; for Jesus has said, I will give thee one.

Sweet, tender, loving voice of Jesus! Who would not be inspired by it to hearken to its claim? Perpetua, a young Roman mother heard it, and though they besought her for her child's sake, for her aged father's sake, to give up the name of Christian, she chose to be torn by wild beasts rather than be unfaithful to her Lord. John Huss heard it, and though they crowned him in the name of the devil, and threatened to burn him if he did not recant, chose to burn rather than deny his Lord. Let us hear His voice and by it be awakened to a full consciousness of our duty towards Him, and choose to die rather than be unfaithful to Him whom we call our Saviour and Lord.



THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS.

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; these things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges," etc.—Rev. ii. 12-17.

## CHURCH AT PERGAMOS.

Pergamos, now called Bergama, was the capital of Mysia, the ancient kingdom of Eumenes, which, after maintaining its independence for a long time, was given by one of its sovereigns to the Romans, and became part of that empire. This city is situated on the banks of the Caicus, at the base and along the slope of high mountains which enclose the city on three sides. It is not all in ruins. It has at present a population of twelve or fourteen thousand, mostly Turks. Long before the Christian era this was a celebrated city. It was the residence of the noted kings of the family of Attalus. It had a magnificent library of 200,000 volumes, which Mark Antony removed to Egypt and presented to Cleopatra. Here the preparation of skins for writing on reached its perfection, and here originated the word *pergamena* or parchment. This city was noted for its idolatry. Here were some of its most famous temples. From this city went three of the Seven Wise Men; here Galen was born, and Æsculapius practiced his art. Here also was the latter worshipped.

Our text is the letter that was written to the Christians in Pergamos by the Great Head of the Church. It is important for us, nineteen centuries afterward, to consider this letter, for it was intended, as were all these epistles, for the perusal and edification of the churches in all after ages. Let us consider what Christ says in this letter.

I. Our attention is arrested by WHAT HE SAYS OF HIMSELF. He writes as He "which hath the sharp sword with two edges."

It should be noted that the representations our Lord gives of Himself in His letters to the churches, are always suitable to the condition of those churches. It is so in this case. He represents Himself as walking in the midst of the candlesticks, or the Victor over death, as He may desire to revive the smouldering fire of the Ephesians' love, or stimulate and strengthen His persecuted followers in Smyrna. Here He represents Himself as having the sharp two-edged sword. At once, one reading this would expect to see the glitter of the two-edged instrument in what Christ says.

This two-edged sword showed He had authority to perform the business He had in hand. 1. *He had power to pass judgment on the Church's condition.* He alone had this power; He alone has it. He judges the individuals of the Church, as well as the Church as a whole. His critical eye is ever upon us. 2. *He has power to penetrate into the deepest recesses of human nature.* No eyes was ever able to see so much of man. His word is most keen sighted. Keble sang of it:

"Eye of God's Word! Where'er we turn,  
Ever upon us! Thy keen gaze  
Can all the depths of sin discern,  
Unravel every bosom's maze."

If the Word is so searching, how keen must be the eye of the Author and Possessor of that Word? 3. *He has power to make the keenest discrimination.* Things may be badly mixed up, but He can separate

them. There may be such a close connection between the good and the evil as to almost defy discovery of distinction. He sees the difference; He will separate. True and untrue Christians in a church are not so associated as to confound His scrutiny. With ease He can set one class on His right hand and the other on His left. Whatever He may say about a church's condition, is absolutely just and true, and He has a right to say it. 4. *He has power to fight for His cause and followers, against all His and their foes.* They on whose side He fights need never fear defeat. The sword He wields never bends nor blunts, and has won marvelous victories. Having spoken of Himself, He proceeds to address the Church.

II. HE SPEAKS TO IT OF ITS STRONG POINT. "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." That is, they maintained unshaken affection for Jesus Christ and His teachings. His name was dear to them, as it has always been to the true followers of Jesus. And how could it be otherwise? It is the dearest name of earth. It charms away our fears and bids our sorrows cease. His teachings were lived by them. Christ does not command attachment to His teachings that does not show itself in living those teachings. The faith of Christ would be no more to men than the faith of Buddha, if both were un-lived. The faith that Christ commends, is practical faith.

But why did Christ commend the loyalty to the truth of these Pergamians? Are men to be praised for doing what is most reasonable? The circumstances in which they showed their loyalty called out His commendation.

1. *They lived where Satan had his seat.* Where they resided was headquarters for the devil. Every city is not equally bad. There are those that are capitals in the devil's empire, and where the court of hell holds its revelry. Pergamos was one of these. Yet it was a beautiful city. Its ruins speak of its former grandeur. Had we traveled in it in the days of Æsculapius, we would have exclaimed, most likely, how beautiful indeed! But to Christ's eye it was a horrible place; and because that in the midst of such circumstances many in this church were faithful to Him and His truth, He speaks well of them.

And yet there would have been no excuse for them if they had failed to be faithful. The religion of Christ is to show the strength of its flame, in that no wind can blow it out. The worse the neighborhood, the better the specimen of Christian life needed.

2. *They lived where there was the most cruel hostility to Christ and His truth.* Early histories of the Church speak of the persecutions the Christians of Pergamos were subjected to. They evinced the martyr spirit for the truth. Christ speaks of this. He says: "Antipas was my faithful martyr who was slain among you."

Who this Antipas was is not now known. In this letter we have the first mention of him. He perhaps held a prominent place in the Church, and was highly esteemed among them.

Fidelity to Christ and His teachings, which was such a prominent feature in this church, should ever be distinctively prominent in every church. The spirit of martyrdom for the truth should possess the soul of

every follower of Jesus. The voice of the flesh, or of secular interests, must not be heeded, if their sacrifice is required in holding on to the name and the faith of Jesus.

III. HE EXPOSES THE WEAKNESS OF THIS CHURCH. They allowed persons of false creed and foul conduct to be within their borders. They were culpable as to the administration of discipline. There were those among them who held the teachings of Balaam, and the Nicolaitanes, which teachings were identical.

The toleration of these persons was the great blemish on the escutcheon of this church. There were persons among them calling themselves Christians, who held false doctrines, and performed foul deeds, and they ought to have expelled them. When Israel entered Canaan they were to exterminate the inhabitants of the land. Cruel duty, you say. But God would thus keep His people pure from the idolatries of those nations, for their own good, and for the good of mankind. Jesus Christ will have His Church pure; and hence the false, in doctrine or practice, is to have no place there, for the good of the Church, and its influence upon the world. To tolerate the false in creed and the vile in life within the Church is to call forth the condemnation of Christ.

The great weakness of this Church is seen in its lack of courage to expel all the Baalites and Nicolaitanes, in creed and practice. They were strong and heroic in their attachment to Jesus, but weak to administer needed discipline.

There is a charity spreading in the Church of our

day, the charity that tolerates false doctrines, and unchristian practices, that must grieve Christ.

May not the lack of proper discipline in churches so grieve Christ as to put Him in the attitude of a warrior against them, rather than a Saviour? May not here be found a reason for the present spiritual dearth?

IV. HE DEMANDS REFORM. "Repent." Christ wants a new order of things in this Church. If it tolerates such characters as He mentions, within it, what influence can it have on the world without, to lift it up? Such persons are as malarial swamps, that lower the value of all the country about them. They cloud the diamond so that it is considered worthless. Christ will have His Church rid of them, so He demands repentance.

1. *He demands that the true members of the Church repent of allowing such a state of things among them.* But what does this repentance imply? It implies not doing what they had been doing in the matter in hand, and doing regarding it what they had not been doing. In other words, it implies being sorry for negligence of duty, and the expulsion of all who will continue to hold the doctrines and perform the practices of Balaam, and of the Nicolaitanes.

2. *He demands that the corrupt in the Church repent.* That all those professed Christians who were corrupt in creed and practice, reform. Jesus is radical in His demands, and uncompromising. Is there need among us for the reformation demanded here? Have not the unchristian Christians of the Church to-day much influence in it, and over it?

V. HE UTTERS AN ALARMING THREAT. "Repent; or



else I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth." These are awful words, and surely had a profound influence over those to whom written.

Jesus had come to them as Saviour. Many of them enjoyed His love in their hearts. He had often come to them in the times of their sorrow, and trial, and had comforted them. But if they hearkened not to His call for reform, He would come to them as a warrior, and fight against them. How mighty is the sword of His mouth to work destruction! The forces in the bosom of the earth conspire and shake continents, the winds put on their strength and blow with desolating fury at the word of His mouth.

VI. HE SPEAKS WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND COMFORT. Christ cannot long wear the aspect of wrath. Its dark cloud may seem to rest on His countenance at times; but the refulgent light of the love that beams therein soon pierces and dispels it. Hear Him: "To him that overcometh," etc. Here is a promise to conquerors.

1. Then in the midst of the most trying circumstances Christians may be victorious, and have grace and power to perform the most trying duties.

2. This promise to conquerors is a glorious one.

(1) The "hidden manna." Christ gives Himself. Feeding on Him, the soul finds its truest nourishment.

(2) "A white stone." What does that mean? Acquittal, fitness for highest dignity, fit to serve as priests before the throne? "In this stone a new name written." What a contrast to the stone Æsculapius gave his votaries! Christ's triumphant ones will know more

of God than any others can know. The Christian has the knowledge that comes through a glorious experience. Is this the "white stone," and is Abba, Father, the "New Name" which, as adopted child, he now calls God?

PERGAMENE CHRISTIANS.

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."—Rev. 2:12.

## PERGAMENE CHRISTIANS.

Who introduced Christianity into Pergamos is not known. It is not improbable that Paul visited this place. Its position and importance as a city would lead us to think he did. But there can only be conjecture on this matter. The early history of the Church in Pergamos is in such obscurity that the angel, or minister, to whom this epistle was addressed, is not known. But while it may not be known who the human agent was who laid the foundation of this Church, it is positively known who the Divine Agent was. There is no spontaneous generation of Christians; no genuine Christian is man-made. He is the work of the Holy Ghost, and hence in Pergamos, where Satan had his throne, the Holy Spirit wrested men from his dominion, and transformed their hearts and lives. These Christians had proper instruction concerning Jesus Christ. They were orthodox. They accepted the whole truth about Him, and held on to it. The extract from the letter to this Church which we have chosen as our text, suggests some facts concerning Christians that are ever interesting.

I. THAT THEY MAY RESIDE IN VERY BAD PLACES. Pergamos was a most wicked place. The devil had his throne there. It was considered a magnificent city. Its people could boast of its great buildings, its vast library, its fashionable life and culture. But it was the very hot-bed of iniquity. It cursed the Romans who became its masters; for its vices became theirs, its voluptuousness and consequent effeminacy, took the

place of manliness with them. One hundred years before the Christian era Pergamos was noted for its low sensual life; but it grew in wickedness through its contact with strangers from many parts, until its moral state became so awful that it might well be described as the capital of Satan's empire. It had its religion. In a beautiful grove, which was the pride of the city, were temples to Zeus, Athene, Aphrodite, Æsculapius, and others; but the very worship of Pergamos showed the horribly low character of its people.

Yet in a city whose abominations cursed the heart of earth's mightiest empire, followers of Jesus Christ were to be found.

When men become Christians, if their occupation is morally unlawful, they must give it up. When the tavern-keeper becomes a Christian, he must give up his wicked business; so must all businesses be given up that are out of harmony with the mind of Christ. But when men become Christians, they are not ordered, like Abraham, to leave their native place, or the place where they are employed, and go elsewhere, if their employment has the approval of Christ. They should stay where they are, and by their lives show the change that Christianity makes in men.

If the Christian is choosing a place of residence, he should not be influenced in his choice solely by secular considerations. Lot was thus influenced, and his choice had terrible consequences. But if he is in a legitimate business when he is converted, while it becomes obligatory upon him to separate himself from the ungodly, yet he is not ordered to leave the locality where he has resided because of its sinfulness. Jesus

did not leave Nazareth, though Nathaniel doubted whether any good thing could come out of it.

Christ needs Christians in the midst of the wicked. They are His lights in the world. He means that they shall shine so that men may see what He can do for them. He would have the wicked see their wickedness by the contrast of their lives with holy living. It is through his followers that He means to save this wicked world. The righteous living of genuine Christians ever backs the truth of the word the preacher proclaims. The lives of the consistent Christians of Pergamos were a mightier argument in favor of Christ, with the wicked population of that city, than all the arguments that logic could devise. Since good men may be found in wicked places, it is very evident that character may be formed independently of visible environment. Do not therefore judge men by the place they come from; but by what they are in themselves. Consider another trust suggested—

II. THAT CHRISTIANS WHO RESIDE IN WICKED PLACES ARE GREATLY EXPOSED TO TEMPTATIONS TO DENY CHRIST. It matters not where the Christian may live, he is assailed by Satan. But there are places in which he is more exposed to temptation than in others. A place may have much wickedness in it, and yet its general sentiment may be in favor of Christianity. But where wickedness is dominant, and religion ignored, the very atmosphere of such a place is prejudicial to piety. Where worldliness is everywhere visible, it has an influence to make its observers worldly; where the lower nature of man is conspicuously pampered, there is an influence that induces to carnality; where

the voice of skepticism is respected, there is a danger of its having influence over minds in possession of the truth.

What is it to deny the faith of Christ? It is to deny His Divinity; the Supernatural in His life; the need of His death to the salvation of man. It implies turning away from Him after professing to be His disciple. To this denial there is great temptation, especially in a place where Satan has mighty influence over the minds and hearts of men.

The Christians in Pergamos were subjected to great temptations to this denial. There were before their faces the attractions of their old lives, where the gratification of sense was their supreme object. There were also in their midst persons whose presence was more dangerous than Satan himself—those who held to the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes, and of Balaam. The curse of heaven was upon these persons. But besides such sources of temptation to deny the faith of Christ, there was persecution. The followers of Jesus were subjected to bitter trial; and one of them was put to death for his faith in Christ.

The moral circumstances of men should be taken into account when we are weighing their character. There are those to whom it is easy to live the Christian life; they are surrounded by influences that are congenial to such a life; but there are those whose lot is cast amid circumstances that are most unfavorable to godliness, and often inimical thereto. The Christian may be called to work with those whose habits are bestial, and whose disposition towards religions is most hostile. The abominable character of Pergamos may be found in the workshop.



There would be more charity shown towards men in judging them, if there were taken into account the surroundings of their lives, and the evils with which they have to battle. It requires greater strength of machinery and more pounds of steam in an engine whose track is up hill for long distances, than are required in an engine whose road is a dead level. There are Christians who need more soul power in an hour to keep them on their uphill way than others need in a whole day, whose path is easy. Here and now let us dwell upon another fact that our text suggests:

III. THAT ALL TEMPTATIONS TO DENY CHRIST MAY BE RESISTED AND HIS NAME HELD WITH UNYIELDING TENACITY. The devil and all his agencies are overcomable. Like a flower blooming in the nook of the mountain while barrenness and desolation are all around, the Christian soul may flourish amidst the moral desolations caused by sin. What great souls have flourished where the moral atmosphere was poisonous! Men whose spinal columns were as unbendable by temptation as the backbone of the mountain, have lived where Satan had his seat.

Many of the Christians of Pergamos held on to Christ, though they were surrounded by scenes of corruption. The constant presence of vice did not lessen it in its horrid deformity to their eyes; nor did the current of the evil life of the multitudes about them avert them in the least from their course toward the skies.

This conduct of Christians in Pergamos is to be expected of all Christians, however trying their situation may be. Look at some reasons:

1. *The Name of Christ, which is Christ Himself, is worthy of our supreme love.* In Him the heart finds its truest rest. This rest the people of the world know naught of. Like birds from bough to bough, or bees from flower to flower, do their affections flit. But in Christ the Christian finds both that rest and sweetness that fully satisfy his soul. Nothing in the world so satisfies. Thus fixed on Christ, his heart ever aspires Godward, and the force of temptation over him loses its power. Thus fixed on Christ, he is so attached to Him that no opposition, not even persecution, can move him.

2. *Life's grandest purpose is reached through the name of Jesus.* There are those whose lives seem purposeless; there are others the objects of whose lives are utterly unworthy of their high nature; but there are those whose lives have the loftiest aim. Their ambition is to become Godlike. To be Godlike is not a boon that may be had in a day to the fullest satisfaction. It may be had in grander degree to-day than it was possessed yesterday; but it is an object that shall never be so fully realized that it may not still be more and more fully enjoyed. This purpose of life, which is the grandest that can animate the human soul, is made realizable by Jesus Christ. How His Name should be clung to! To let it go is, no matter what else is attained, to lose life, and pauperize our eternity.

3. *There is all the help that Heaven can give within easy reach.* No man should blame his circumstances for the faults and failures of his life. A man may be a Christian anywhere. God stands back of him who

is dead-set against sinning. There is the promise of help in every time of need.

Now, if it is possible to be faithful to Christ in the midst of adverse circumstances, how much more easy is it to hold on to His Name when they are favorable? And yet it does seem that opposition to right living develops a grander manhood than do favoring circumstances. Resisting the devil is work that makes souls grow strong and great. The twig would never become the giant of the forest if it had not to withstand the mighty blasts of storms, and Joseph and Daniel might never have been heard of but for that resistance to temptation that has made them famous. But another suggestion of our text—

IV. CHRIST TAKES GREAT INTEREST IN THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL TO HIM. As He looked on gay, voluptuous, splendid Pergamos, he did not only see the crowds of the degraded who gave evidence of the supremacy of Satan in their city; but He saw there men and women who professed His religion and with unfaltering steps walked in His ways. Great as may be the multitude of evildoers, the good are never lost among them to the eye of Jesus. He never confounds the good with the bad, or the bad with the good. He had His eye on His followers in Pergamos. He knew all about them. He has His eye ever on the good. He knows all about them.

I. *He knows their works.* He knows the business in which they are engaged, to earn a livelihood, and sympathizes with them while they toil. He knows their efforts to serve Him, and the sympathy they have for Him in His work, and, too, the efforts they put

forth to help Him. A tract is not distributed in His Name, without His knowledge.

2. *He knows where they live.* He knows the character of the community where they live. He knows the temptations of the place where they live. He knows the character of the men of the workshop where they work. He knows the very street they live in, and the number of the house, too. He sends His Spirit to them where they live, to give strength to be courageous in His service; to comfort them in their troubles and trials. He visits them where they dwell, and turns their homes, though humble, into heavenly places, and when they must leave their earthly dwellings for journey into the beyond, He is present to accompany them all the way.

3. *He knows their faithfulness to His Name.* The steadfast souls of His people delight Him. He passes encomiums upon them, more to be desired than the thrones of earth. To be spoken of as "Antipas, my faithful martyr," is to have that said about us more glorious than to be called king or emperor of earth's mightiest people. He knows who deny His faith. He knows who hold fast His Name. He knows what many have to contend against to be faithful to Him. It has, and does still, in some places, require the martyr spirit to hold on to Christ.

Whatever be our situation, then, let us remember there can be no excuse for unfaithfulness to Jesus. And let us remember, too, that if faithful we are serving Him who knows all about us, even where we dwell; and that He will confess us before the face of His Father and the holy angels.

THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA.

"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."—Rev. ii. 18-29.

## CHURCH AT THYATIRA.

Thyatira was in the northern part of Lydia, near the Roman road that connects Pergamum with Sardis. It was about fifty miles from the former place. It was strongly Macedonian in its population; which may be accounted for by the fact that it was a Macedonian colony, established by Alexander the Great. It was founded by Sileucus Nicator, and was in the days in which this epistle was sent to its church, a city of considerable importance. Its chief industry was dyeing. At the present time it is a town of about 1000 houses; one-third of their inhabitants are Christians, and are the most influential in the trade of the place. The modern name of this place is Ak-Hissar, the "White Castle." The word Thyatira very much resembles the Greek word for daughter; and it is noticeable that this epistle is the only letter in which a female is spoken of. Who brought Christianity to Thyatira is not known. Perhaps this church was originated through the instrumentality of Lydia, who was a seller of purple goods in this place, but who through Paul was led to Christ. The letter to the church at this place is the longest of all the epistles, and profoundly impressive. In it, Christ for the first time speaks of Himself as the Son of God. It was His custom to speak of Himself as the Son of Man; but now having ascended to His seat in the heavens, He calls Himself by His more divine name. But His de-

scription of Himself here has a bearing on what He writes to this church. His tone through its every line is that one of authority, and power, and from Whose fierce gaze nothing is hidden. As we look into the contents of this letter there are four truths impressed on our minds by it, which truths we shall now proceed to dwell on:

I. THAT CHRIST MOST HIGHLY APPRECIATES THE GOOD THERE IS IN A CHURCH. He whose eyes are as a flame of fire is not on the lookout only for antagonism to Himself. He does not ignore the good there is among a people because of the evil there may be there, and care only to speak of the latter. He not only knows all the good there exists, but delights to give it special notice and praise. He knew all about the good traits of this church, and notices them with much specificness. 1. He speaks of their *charity*. They had that "enthusiasm of humanity" of which the author of "Ecce Homo" speaks. Their Christian profession was not empty; it was not mere sound. They had that which evidences the possession of genuine religion. A Christian, or a church, without charity, is entirely out of harmony with the spirit of Christ. But this church was not a mere professor; but enjoyer of this divine spirit. Its manifestations greatly delighted Christ. They had really the constituent of true greatness, which consists not in the knowledge of tongues, or large benevolence, or great eloquence, or even mighty faith; but in love. 2. He speaks of their *service*. Charity is not a mere theme for contemplation; it is an active power in the soul. It puts its possessors to work—to the highest kind of work. It



animated this church to engage in the noblest activities. As an evidence of its possession, this church was true to its deaconship. It ministered to both the temporal and spiritual needs of the most needy. It therefore had noble ideas of Christian duty, as it gave attention to the temporal needs of men, as well as their spiritual. A church of this sort expresses the Christly spirit much more than that one whose attention is but little devoted to men's temporal wants. 3. He speaks of their *faith*. They had faith in God, in Christ, and in the possibility of their fellows' elevation. This faith is implied in service. For if men do not believe in God, they will not serve Him; if they lack faith in Christ, they will not follow Him; if they do not believe in the possibility of man's spiritual elevation, they will not attempt it. They may seek to alleviate his condition; but this will not be the work of faith; but of sympathy—philanthropy. This church had faith in all the facts of the Gospel. Its great principles were prized above all things else. 4. He speaks of their *patience*. In the heart in which love and faith hold a high place there will be a calm, amid circumstances that would cause the unrest of impatience. The existence of patience in a man, or church, is only known in testing times. This church had its trials; but its faith and love held it steady amid them. Christ saw, to a goodly degree, His own character in this church. Great was His faith, His love; but O how great also His patience! There is no time a Christian man appears so Christlike, as when amid untoward circumstances he calmly awaits the good pleasure of God. There is no time the cliff by the sea appears so

sublime, as unmoved it stands, while the briny waters of the sea drip from its tall form, which the fierce hands of the tempest flung in its countenance. Patience gives rest; not the rest of music's notes, when all the voices are hushed into deepest silence; but the rest that comes from the influence of the sweet notes which patience like an angel sings in the soul. 5. He speaks of their *progress in goodness*. "And the last to be more than the first." This is a remarkable statement about this church. It is one that should be true of every church; but is not of many. It should be true of every Christian; but is not of great numbers. This church had spiritual stability, and a soul life that showed itself in making progress. When these Christians began their new life, they were enthusiastic for Christ. But that enthusiasm did not wane as the circumstances amid which they became Christians changed, and became less influential for soul saving. They did not cool in their love for Christ, as the tide of revival ebbed out; but their love increased, their faith grew larger, and the desire the young Christian has for work, became in them stronger, so that to the eye of Christ, they were better Christians when He wrote this letter to them than they were when they entered on that life. Their piety was not like the cloud or the dew, which soon disappears. Thus is it evident that Christ highly appreciates the good there is in churches. He knew every excellence of the church at Thyatira.

And as it was with this church in the early days of Christianity, so is it with the churches to-day; Christ knows every excellence, and praises it. The consider-

ation of this fact leads to examination and interrogation. What would He say about our church? What would He speak of approvingly in us? These may be made personal questions. Are we progressing in love and faith, and in good works? Would He speak of our patience? Some of us might fear to have Christ speak of us as His eyes of flame see us. How impatient we are with our fellows, in our families, with our Christian brethren, with God! He does not move quickly enough for us sometimes. As we think of ourselves we feel like praying as George Croley has sung:

“Teach me to feel that thou art always nigh;  
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear;  
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;  
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.”

And yet, perhaps, if He should speak to us who find much fault with ourselves, He would comfort us by telling us of the good He sees in us; for to His loving eye, though a fiery one, we may be better than we are disposed to adjudge ourselves.

II. THAT THE GOOD THERE IS IN A CHURCH DOES NOT MAKE HIM OBLIVIOUS TO THE EVIL THERE MAY BE THERE. It sometimes happens that where good is very manifest in a person the evil that may exist in him is not much spoken of. But while Christ had many words of praise for this church, He had also words of censure. “I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel,” &c. Who was this Jezebel? Some think she was the wife of the angel of this church, and translate “woman” in the text “wife.” There is much authority for both render-

ings. Others think that the name is the personification of heathenish doctrines that were taught by some within the church, while others think it was given to a woman of high birth, and great influence, who followed and taught the horrid doctrines of the Nicolaitanes.

History gives us reason for the loftiest utterances concerning woman. Grander things may not be said concerning man. Her splendid heroism has shown itself all through the ages, as circumstances have called it out, as the process of the lapidary brings out the brilliance of the gem. The poet as he sings of her says:

"A woman's heart, though delicate, is strong;  
Like virgin gold it takes the furnace heat,  
Giving to history and immortal song  
A glow of heroism, pure and sweet.  
Great men have sought the battle in their pride,  
Hewing a path to glory as they fell,  
But women, braver still, have grandly died  
In silent struggles fame may never tell."

But while too loudly can scarcely be sung the praises of the deeds of noble women, it must be admitted that in both State and Church, bad women have exercised a most ruinous influence. Kings and statesmen, popes and cardinals, bishops and preachers, have again and again found themselves under their wicked spell. Here in this church in Thytira, prominently appears a woman whose presence therein imperils it. Notice some things about her.

I. She bore an odiously historic name. They say there is nothing in a name. But there was in this one. She was a new edition, without any corrections,

of that old enemy of God and Israel, the wife of Ahab, Israel's king. She was one of the progeny of Satan who maintain, and show, in a most pronounced manner, the characteristics of their parent. A child may be another self of its parent. The law of heredity has much to do with the formation of character. But it is possible for one to reproduce in him or herself the character of another long since gone from earth, and with whom there was no physical relationship. To maintain in earth the characteristics of debased humanity, is to show in its blackest aspect the spirit of hell. Such was the spirit this woman showed.

2. She was lying in her pretensions. She claimed to be a prophetess. Perhaps she had some physical gift or acquirement, which made it appear that she was more than an ordinary mortal. It is wonderful how people can be duped by pretenders. It is marvelous how people can keep up a deception of others, which sometimes becomes a deception of self. Alexander the Great aspired to the fame of Homer's heroes. But they were all offsprings of the gods. Hence to be looked upon as a deity, he went a long, perilous journey, to the temple of Jupiter Ammon, in the Oasis of Siwah, to have the priests of that shrine declare his "divine origin." The oracles of the heathen were believed in by philosophers and warriors, though they were lying. This woman may have wrought herself into the notion that she was inspired.

3. She was heathenish in her doctrine, and vile in her morals. She taught the eating of things offered to idols, and that fornication was no sin. The worship of the heathen in the days of this letter was shock-

ingly low, and this woman, posing as a member of this church, sought to bring into it equally horrid practices, as though Christianity sanctioned such vile conduct.

4. She was successful in her wicked work. Fine, perhaps, in appearance, impressive in manner, she gained the attention and credence of some of the servants of Christ. Let us not say, they were weak-kneed, easily duped, who would hearken to, and follow such a woman; for Christ chides the church for allowing her to seduce *His servants*. How absurd is the position of those who to-day cry out against creed. "It is conduct, not creed, that attention is to be given to," they say. But does not creed affect conduct? Will he offer the sacrifice of himself to Christ as God, who looks upon Him as only a man? Will he abhor licentiousness, who looks upon it as not worthy of the condemnation of man?

Too much care cannot be exercised to keep the teaching of the church in harmony with the Gospel. There may be within her bounds those whose belief is affected by doubt. The thoughtful mind is sometimes thus affected. It is often a long, weary struggle some Christians have with doubt, before the day of victory dawns. There should be the most affectionate sympathy with inquirers, and no pains spared to lead them into the light. But when the church member becomes heretic, and seeks to spread his heresy among its members, or misrepresent, by his contrary teachings the church to those that are without, he should not be tolerated.

III. THAT CHRIST'S TREATMENT OF THE CAUSE OF EVIL IN A CHURCH MAY BE AT FIRST MILD, BUT IT

WILL BE AFTERWARD TERRIBLY RETRIBUTIVE. How patient is the Son of Man with the conduct of many in His church. At once He does not fling the lightning bolts of His vengeance at them. Were we to follow the course of our reasoning we should conclude that One so pure, One so interested in the purity of His church, would at once wreak vengeance upon any who would seek to contaminate it. But facts do not sustain our logic. In Thyatira was this bad woman, an agency of doctrinal and moral corruption, and yet judgment did not swiftly visit her. Here notice some facts—

1. He gave her space to repent. He did not desire her destruction, but rather her salvation. Christ considered her, vile as she was, worth saving. Everybody, however vile, is of such worth in the estimation of Christ that He will save them, if they will. That they may be saved, they have time to repent. Lengthened days are frequently misunderstood as to their purport. It is attributed to strength of constitution; but to sinners, both within and without the church, it means space to repent. How mercifully He dealt with this woman and her followers! But mark further—

2. This merciful treatment of her was to be followed by fearful retribution. Her retribution was to come along the line of her sinning, and was to be inflicted because of her impenitence. How often this is the case! Punishment is sometimes intended to be corrective; but this was intended to destroy. Notice further—

3. The treatment given to her was to be shared by her followers. Time was given them to repent, which

if they did not rightly improve, was to be followed by great tribulation.

Now mark some facts as to the judgments that were to be visited on this woman and on all her progeny. 1. They were to widely express the keenness of the divine scrutiny. There were perhaps secrets connected with the practice of this woman's teachings. These would be shown to be known by the judgments that would be inflicted.

2. The judgments would be strictly just. Every one would receive according to his works. It is of the Lord's mercy that men are not swept away by the tornado of wrath. He desires that they repent and live. But if they do not, He will visit them with His judgments, both here and hereafter.

IV. THAT HE PROPOSES TO BESTOW THE GRANDEST GIFTS ON THOSE WHO CONTINUE FAITHFUL TO HIM. That there were many followers of Jezebel, in this church, we do not know. Perhaps most of its members rejected her doctrine, and were ignorant of the satanic depths connected with her mysteries. They showed their fidelity by holding on with a tight grip to what they had of Christlike principles. It no doubt required much fighting to do so. But when He should come the struggle would be over, and the rewards of victory certainly follow. They would enjoy—

1. Exemption from further burdens. There will be no trial of faith in the future. There will be no Jezebel to tempt, nor devil of any sort. There will be rest from all conflict with evil. They would enjoy—

2. The bestowment of power. "To him will I give



power over the nations." Power to confute the arguments of nations against Christ. Power, also, or authority to rule. The saints are to rule the world. Earth has a glorious political prospect. Upon the throne with Christ shall the saints sit. Their rule shall be inflexibly right. It shall be shepherd-like in its spirit, but rigid in its adherence to right. Woe be to those who do not yield to it, or who strive against it.

3. The possession of the grandest object in heaven. How beautiful is the Morning Star, harbinger of the day! Jesus is Himself the Morning Star, and hence it is Himself He gives to all His faithful ones.

All churches in all the ages should be interested in these letters. Written to Thyatira, they were written for the profit of all. Every Christian should be interested. Christ commends him for the good there is in him, sees and dislikes the evil there may also be in him. Admonishes him to amend his crooked ways, and promises him large things if he is true.

"Lord still the seas, and shield my ship from harm;  
Instruct my sailors, guide my steersman's arm;  
Touch thou my compass, and renew my sails,  
Send stiffer courage, or send milder gales;  
Make strong my cable, bind my anchor faster;  
Direct my pilot, and be Thou my Master."



THE CHURCH IN SARDIS.

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write, These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come unto thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I shalt come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess him before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."—Rev. iii. 1-6.

## THE CHURCH IN SARDIS.

On the right bank of the golden-sanded Pactolus, which, with the Hermus, watered the great plain at the northern foot of Mount Tmolus, stood Sardis, the most noted city of Lydia. It was distant, southeast from Thyatira, about thirty miles. Here was sealed the fate of the Lydian empire; for after a siege of two weeks notwithstanding its boasted impregnability, it fell into the hands of Cyrus, and with it the domain of Cræsus. There remain only the ruins of this city, amid which is the debris of the palace of its marvelously wealthy resident, and king, in which, in the days of his glory, might have been seen three of Greece's Seven Wise Men: Thales, the father of divine philosophy; Cleobulus, the noted riddler and song maker, and Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, whose answers as to the two happiest men, made such an impression on Cræsus. Among these ruins, as if to impress upon the visitor the thought that the curse of the Almighty rests upon the place, is a miserable village of mud huts, called *Sart*, inhabited by ignorant Turks. When Christianity was introduced into Sardis we know not, nor who introduced it; but we know that in the days of the Apostle John there was in it a strong and influential church. It was to this church the words of our text were addressed; and to the consideration of which we pass on. But let us first remark that it was typical of many that would appear in ages after it: that it was a

type of many, we fear, that exist to-day. Five things may be said about this church at Sardis.

I. IT WAS UNDER THE EYE OF THE SOURCE OF ALL SPIRITUAL POWER. He who had the Seven Spirits knew, because He saw, their works. This was true of all the churches; but it was only in connection with the church at Sardis that Christ represented Himself as possessed of the plenitude of the Spirit. This He did as He spoke of having the Seven Spirits of God. That this church was under such an eye some things might be expected. 1. That its conduct was circumspect. Because of his fear of offending his father, how circumspect is the loving son in his conduct at all times; but especially when the eye of his father is upon him. The loyal subject shows the respect of perfect obedience to the laws of his country; but if the chief magistrate, or ruler thereof, were watching him, would not that fact make him, if possible, more careful in his conduct? The artisan may be faithful ever in the execution of his work; but will not the eye of him for whom he works influence him to show, if possible, more than ordinarily, his skill? And if the eye of man is so influential with his fellows, how much more might we suppose the eye of Christ would be over men? How exact, then, might we suppose the conduct of this church was. How careful to do the commands of Christ, and make no false showing of His religion. It might be expected that, 2. There was enthusiastic sympathy with Christ in His work. Knowing that the great thought of the Head of the Church was the salvation of men; that with Him in its accomplishment all heaven were interested; that nothing could

transpire on earth that had in it any importance compared with the salvation of a soul: with what zeal would they co-operate with Him in achieving His master purpose? It might be expected that, 3. It would be richly endowed with spiritual power. He was in their midst who possessed the Spirit illimitably. He possessed the Spirit that He might bestow His power on His church—that power needed in the work it was to accomplish. Could it be supposed that within reach of power any one would be weak? Since power is so much valued; since spiritual power has been always so vitally necessary, surely this church at the very Source of power, must have been mighty. It might be expected that, 4. Its life was highly spiritual. That while it attended to the affairs of life they were of but very secondary importance. Their aspirations were after heavenly things. They attended to business, made money, grew rich, perhaps; but they also attended to the worship of God, and prayed much. So might we reason concerning those who were under the eye of Him who was possessed of all spiritual power. But, sometimes the reasonings of men may appear most cogent, when facts do not illustrate conclusions. In the case of the church engaging our thought, this fact will appear as we proceed; for another thing that may be said about it is, that when this letter was written to it

II. IT WAS IN TERRIBLY DEPLORABLE STATE. In the very presence of the divine throne angels rebelled. Under the very eye of Christ this church became very degenerate. Concerning its condition notice three facts: 1. The sadness of it did not appear on the surface of its life. It had a high reputation. Whatever a few may have

thought, among the many it stood high. It had a name to live. Perhaps that name came down from other days; for in its earlier history it had a high name for rectitude of conduct, and Christian consistency—it had those qualities which gave it a high standing among the churches of Asia Minor. There was not in it a Jezebel as there was in Thyatira; there were no Nicolaitanes, as there were in Pergamus. It was given to good works. And hence it stood well in the opinion of those about it. 2. Its true character was apparent to the eye of Jesus. He sees under the surface of things. It is not His principle to judge by appearance. Hence, what often appears unlovely to the eyes of men, is very lovely to His eye; and often what appears attractive and pleasing to many, is horrid and repulsive to Him. This church may have had as high a notion of itself as was the esteem in which it was held by men. It may have prided itself in its orthodoxy, its discipline, its refinement. It may have boasted of its collections, and charitable deeds; but as it was seen by Christ, it was not what it appeared to be. “It had a name to live, but was dead.” To put it another way: it was hypocritical. There is no deceiving Christ’s eye. It appeared to be alive, but it was dead. It is not on what people say about His church that Christ puts stress; it is on what the church is in its character, as He sees it. A church, like a man, may have a good reputation, but a poor character. A church with a good reputation and yet a bad heart character is abhorrent to Jesus; it cannot exhibit the true nature of His kingdom. As this church appeared to the eye of Christ (1) It was devoid of the essential



element of the Christian nature. The distinguishing feature of the disciples of Jesus is that they are spiritually alive. Jesus has imparted to them His life. This church once possessed this essential thing; but now it was dead. As it appeared to His eye (2) it was powerless. What power is there in the dead form? Cannot men do with it what they please, so far as resistance from it is concerned? How powerless is a dead church! The devil has, largely, his own way with it, so long as he keeps within the bounds of a pleasing decorum. That the church in places is doing so little is not because it is inactive; but because it has not the power necessary to cast out devils. A dead church has a poor show with Satan. As it appeared to His eye (3) this church was without joy. Spiritual life is necessary to spiritual joy. Men may have other kinds of joy, and not this kind. There are a great many Christians who know not the joy of the Lord, because they have not its prerequisite, the life of the Lord. As the church appeared to His eye (4) true progress was impossible to it. A dead tree cannot grow; nor can a dead man. The progress of the soul is man's truest advance; but without the life of Christ not a step can be taken in that direction. As the church appeared to His eye (5) He could not use it. Christ hates death. He will not use spiritual corpses to advance His kingdom. It is a divine impossibility to use dead Christians as soldiers to fight battles, or as heralds to win men by word and life, from sin. The dead in the churches keep many people from going to them. Men instinctively hate death, and dislike going where it is. 3. It was the natural consequence of exist-

ing conditions. Instead of this church being all that our reasoning has led us to conclude concerning it, it was the very opposite in most important particulars. (1) It was not watchful. Why exhort it to become such, if this already was its character? Had it been watchful, decay would have been impossible. The watcher by the bed of the sick cannot keep death away; but a man who watches his conduct that it please Him whose eye is upon him; who watches the bulwarks of his nature that no foe enters; who watches the garden of his soul that no weed spring up to choke, or insect exist to kill its fruits and flowers—death can't touch such a man. (2) It was negligent of spiritual health. Why exhort it to strengthen the things that are ready to die, if already proper attention were being given to spiritual health? This neglect of soul health was the cause of the condition of death that already existed in this church, and was endangering the life of any good that yet remained. Had there existed care for spiritual health, death could never have struck it. Spiritual death may be kept off eternally! Thank God! Let Christians nourish their souls, and live out in the pure air where God walks, take proper spiritual exercise, and they'll never die. (3) It was half-hearted in its work. That this was the case appears from the statement of Jesus: "I have not found thy works perfect before God." The fact that the Great Head of the Church was watching them did not inspire them to put forth their best efforts to do His work well. Love, if not respect, must have ceased to exist in this church, for if it had loved Him, it would have done its best to please Him. When we put our whole

soul into our work for Christ, and do it as well as we can; poor though the work may be, He prizes it as if it were perfect. The work a church does may be a reason for its condemnation. Its performance is an acknowledgment of Christ's claims; but the way in which it is done may prove that those claims have not been met. The tendency of the half-heart is to become no-heart. A no-hearted Christian is dead; a half-hearted Christian is dying. Thus while our reasoning may be true as to the high characteristics a church ought to have, its history may show that it failed to come up to its glorious possibilities. Another fact about this church—

III. IT WAS UNDER AN ALARMING THREAT. "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." He who uttered these words had all authority over the church; He possessed the Seven Stars. He had the right to judge its conduct, and punish its unfaithfulness. In His operations in nature He proceeds with such precision that men may tell when certain phenomena will appear. But in His operations in churches no one can lay down rules as to the times or character of His operations. He may confound men by the sudden manifestations of His wrath.

Indeed, it would seem as if in this threat there was a reference to the swiftness with which the enemy of Lydia swept down on this city centuries before. Cyrus came upon it when Cræsus was least expecting him; and when it was thought to be impregnable Hyræades scaled the walls, followed by daring spirits, and thus an entrance gained, Sardis was soon trampled in most cruel fashion beneath the feet of invading hordes.

But how shall the threat that hangs over this church be averted? Is it possible to avert it? Yes. 1. By remembering what they had received and heard. By calling to mind the truths they had often listened to, and the good they had often received. This is a first step from being back-slidden. 2. They were to "hold fast." Their situation was one of awful peril; but they might be saved by seizing upon their recollections of the truths they had heard, and the good they had experienced, and holding on to these with an unyielding tenacity. By so doing they would hold God's truth and the thought of the sweet experiences of other days in their minds, and by these, through the Holy Spirit, be led back to faithfulness to Christ. 3. They were to repent. Remembering truth and the glorious facts of soul history: not even seizing on to them, and holding them, could save this church or any other from impending doom. There must be a practical utilization of truth. There must be repentance. Genuine repentance in backsliders should follow remembrance of truth and seizing upon it. 4. There was to be watchfulness. One of the reasons for the condition of this church when Christ addressed it, was neglect of watchfulness. They were not again to be guilty of this neglect. They were to watch, and no evil would befall them.

Has Christ ceased to threaten churches which are dead or dying? Does He not in our age come upon a church in wrath? Yet threatened wrath may be averted by calling to mind the glorious truths that have been heard, seizing them as of vital importance, and

heartily practicing them. Another fact about this church

IV. IT WAS POSSESSED OF A SUBLIME MINORITY  
 "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." There has ever been the noble few. Sometimes it has been very few. However degenerate earth became in past days, there were always those who knew and loved God. Here we learn that. 1. The good may rise superior to their moral environment. Did not Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, the saints in Cæsar's household, and these Sardian Christians? God's jewels keep their sparkle, however muddy their surroundings. 2. That Christ recognizes the good wherever they may be. They are the works of His hands; the proofs of His saving power; the objects of His delight; His representatives. 3. That He will show His distinguishing regard for them. 1. He will make them His companions. 2. He will give them victory. "White" betokens victory. They shall walk as victors with Christ. 3. Theirs shall be the grandest progress: they "shall walk" with Christ. Another fact about this church

V. IT HAD YET WITHIN ITS REACH GLORIOUS POSSIBILITIES. It was dead; but it might become alive. Things in it were ready to die! but they might be strengthened. It had sinned; but it might repent. Was not this letter to this church to awake it from the sleep of death, and to bring about a glorious reformation? If this be so, then, 1. This church might yet become a conquering church. 2. It might yet possess a glorious character—be dressed in white garments. 3. It might yet be worthy of a place in the book of life.

4. It might yet have the honor of being confessed by Christ before His Father and before His angels. O, the mercy of Jesus! Within the reach of a spiritually dead man or a dead church, there are glorious possibilities.

THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA.

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; that shutteth and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and has not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and, to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the words of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”—Rev. iii, 7-13.



## THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA.

Philadelphia was an important city of the kingdom of Lydia. It is thought to have been Egyptian in its origin, deriving its name probably from Ptolemy Philadelphius. It was built at the foot of Mt. Tmolus, on the edge of a district of a very volcanic nature. Because of its situation, it suffered much from earthquakes; so much so that it is a wonder that it was not abandoned. But it commanded the pass between the Hermus and the Maeander Valleys, and its soil was most fertile for vine culture, hence its inhabitants clung to it, though at one time in the reign of Tiberias, they fled to the fields, fearing destruction from earthquake. It was a city of commercial importance; it had a large population, most of which were heathens; but there were also many Jews there. The founder of the church in this place is not known. Perhaps it received the gospel from Ephesus. It was evidently not a large church. It was most likely "a little flock," in the midst of circumstances that greatly tested its fidelity. Our information concerning this church as to its spirituality, is derived from this letter; but Ignatius, in his letter to Philadelphians, mentions some facts, which show that its relation to Christ was imperiled by the influences of Judaism within its borders. This church was one of the two out of the seven against which Christ uttered no word of complaint. Among the names of bishops attending the early councils of

the church are found some from Philadelphia. This city remains to this day. That it does, is a wonderful fact; for fierce wars have raged around it. When Tamerlane, that monster of cruelty, destroyed the names and sites of churches, as if defended by an invulnerable bulwark, this city survived his terrible work. It fell into the hands of the Turks in the fourteenth century, and is now known by the name *Allah Shehr*, "the city of God." Of its fifteen thousand inhabitants, about five thousand are Christians. What Christ says in this letter to this ancient church should have our most careful consideration. In it—

I. HE SPEAKS OF HIMSELF. *Only one who is divine* would speak of himself, as Christ does in this letter. He speaks of Himself as: 1. "*He that is holy.*" Emphatically, the Holy One. No taint of evil in Him; no defilement on His name. He has not become such by ablutions; but is originally and eternally holy. In Him is centred all goodness; He has no moral defect. His keenest observers could detect no flaw in Him; and some of these were His bitterest foes, and would gladly have done so, had any existed. Men noted among the ancients for their uprightness were moral only in spots. In some directions they shone with an attractive lustre; but in others they were darksome. What Christ says of Himself His critics admit. For as the ray of light contains all the colors of the rainbow, so does His character contain all the glories of the divinest morality. He speaks of Himself as:

2. "*He that is true.*" In these words He reaffirms everything He has ever said about Himself, His mission, or man. Such a statement should neutralize all

arguments against Christ used by Judaizing teachers. He is the fountain of truth.

(1) He is true in His concepts of truth. They perfectly accord with the divine mind. Truth in His mind is in all particulars as it is in the divine mind. (2) He is true in His expression of truth. What He says is an accurate expression of His mind. He said great and astounding things; but what He said was in harmony with reality. (3) He is true as the divine ideal of moral character. In His life God saw His thought of life lived. While men are true to Him as their copy, they approach the standard of divinest excellence. (4) He is true in His professed relationships to men. He is the world's Friend, and Saviour. He speaks of Himself as

3. "*He that hath the key of David.*" To bear a key on the shoulders was an ancient badge of office. The priests of Ceres bore a key on their shoulders. To have the key of David is to have the authority of David. Christ here represents Himself as having that authority in His kingdom that David had in his. David had all authority in his kingdom. He had the power even to choose his successor. Christ has all authority in His kingdom. (1). It is His right in the nature of the case. There could be no such kingdom without Him. It is as much dependent on Christ for its existence, as is the day on the sun. (2). It is exercised by Him only. Only He can admit into His kingdom; only He can bestow its privileges upon any. He only can open its door to the soul, so that only those who fulfill the terms of entrance can be admitted. (3). It cannot be contravened. Whom He admits into His

kingdom no man can put out; and no one whom He excludes can force an entrance. It is He who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. Since then Christ has the keys and alone uses them, character shall alone determine to whom He shall open, and against whom He shall close the door of His kingdom.

II. HE SPEAKS OF THE STRENGTH OF THIS CHURCH. "Thou hast a little strength." Christ does not here speak of moral strength. If we were so to understand Him, it would be difficult to interpret other parts of this letter. Instead of having small moral strength, they seemed to be strong. He speaks here of some other kind of strength than moral. There are several senses in which a spiritually strong church may be weak. I. *In numbers.* This church had a small membership. It had not grown as had some of the churches in Asia Minor. Smallness of numbers may exist where there is greater spirituality. Facts do not sustain the reasoning that fewness of numbers is evidence of spiritual weakness. Says the thoughtless enthusiast: let us have greater spirituality, and we shall have larger church memberships. In some places this might be true; but it does not always follow. 2. *A church may be weak socially.* It may have in its membership no persons of prominence. Its buildings may have no architectural beauty. No great organ nor well-trained choir may discourse sacred numbers within its walls. Like an individual of life's low walks, it may have no social standing; the learned and the refined may not be attracted by it. And yet socially weak, looked at from the earthly standpoint, it may,

looked at from the spiritual point of view, be highly influential in heaven.

3. *A church may be financially weak.* Its membership may be composed of the working classes, who have only their daily earnings to meet all their need. No people of leisure, because of large means, may be found in its ranks. It may not be able to support large charities, or devote great sums to advance the kingdom of Christ in heathen lands. There are different directions in which a church may be weak besides in moral strength. In the above senses was the strength of the church at Philadelphia, little. But while in these senses its strength was small, morally, it was great, as appears from the tenor of the letter.

III. HE SPEAKS OF THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE CHURCH. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door." Probably the untoward circumstances of this church were changing when this letter was addressed to it. Old oppositions were breaking down, perhaps, and the dispositions of the population of the city becoming more favorable toward it. The severe wintry condition of things that had existed was giving way to a more genial, springlike condition, and the bars of ice that had kept hearts tightly closed against it, were melting, and easy access thereto was becoming possible. As to opportunities of usefulness it may be said I. *Christ makes them.* Are we to think that the work of Christ is just what appears in us, and in the churches?—that He does not operate in the hearts of men who keep away from Christian influences?—that He does not control the steps of events so that they shall be in the direction of the interests of His cause?

He uses the circumstances of ordinary life, and also political changes, to prepare the way for His coming to individual hearts; to communities; to nations. But He also opens doors by the direct influence of His Spirit on men. He opens their eyes to see; He arrests their attention; and in the dawning light he gives them opportunity to behold themselves, and to feel their awful need of His salvation.

It is not appreciated as it should be the great fact that, Christ makes opportunities of usefulness for His people. He removes prejudice, softens hearts and thus opens doors into the soul for the entrance of the evangel of gospel truth.

2. *They may open to churches of little strength.* Christ by the operations of His spirit may open for a church that is weak numerically, socially, politically, financially; but strong morally, doors of usefulness, that may be wonderful. This He has always done. What prestige had the church in the early times, except for piety? But doors were divinely opened, into which entering, Christianity made rapid advances. It is to the spiritually strong rather than the numerically, that Christ opens doors. The great church, both as to numbers and social standing, but low in spirituality, whose members are theatre-goers, and card players, may not have open in the minds and hearts of the people. He removes prejudice, softens hearts, and as the church of little worldly strength, but whose high-toned spirituality impresses men with the dignity of the Christly life.

3. *They may be given in recognition of past activity.*  
"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an

open door." Fidelity to duty is rewarded by larger opportunities for usefulness. Christ shows His appreciation of work done for Him by opening doors to do yet larger. The trusted workman is employed, while mere time-servers and loiterers are allowed to go idle. Opportunities for usefulness should always be hailed with delight; for they are evidences of the divine favor and appreciation.

4. *Their improvement is followed by most desirable results.* They who rightly utilize them are blessed themselves. Working for Christ makes men larger and grander. Idle Christians are retrogressive. The progress of the soul, which is man's truest advancement, cannot be made by him who is indifferent to that work for men which Christ seeks to accomplish. But besides individual blessedness following the entrance of doors of usefulness opened by Christ, the Church is advanced. Philadelphia did not always remain a weak church numerically. It grew as it responded to the calls of duty. This may be concluded from the scenes through which it has passed, and its existence, and importance at this hour. It is thus churches are ever to grow. The doors of usefulness that are opened for them are to be entered; and as the result, people will be converted. Thus it appears that Christ trusts to human instrumentality for the advancement of His kingdom; but at the same time that advance is under His direction, for it is He Who opens up the way.





THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA.

PART SECOND.

## THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA.

### IV. HE SPEAKS OF THE LOYALTY OF THIS CHURCH.

“And has kept My word, and has not denied My name.” “Thou has kept the word of My patience.” The martyr spirit manifested itself in this church. This spirit may show itself by adherence to the right, irrespective of consequences, as well as in actual sacrifice of life. He who ignores circumstances, however painful they may be, and discharges his duties to Jesus, is worthy of being considered loyal to Him. This was the merited character of this church. Notwithstanding the bitterness of the persecutions they bore for their attachment to Him, these things they did: 1. *They kept His word.* Ignatius in his epistle to the Philadelphians says that there were those among them who denied the authority of the Gospels and the Epistles, and considered only the Old Testament Scriptures as binding. Such as these would seek to influence genuine Christians to become fellow-believers. But their efforts were vain; and so were all others to sway the minds of these Philadelphian Christians from their faith in, and fidelity to, the words of Jesus. What He said they treasured in their hearts as more precious than the gems of kings’ crowns. What He ordered done they did, though all hell opposed. 2. *They stood by His name.* The persecutions of their adversaries did not compel them to give up their Christian profession, or drive them to make a subterfuge of some other name,

less hated, to save them from their enemy's rage, while privately they revered Christ's. No; no whirlwind of antagonism was mighty enough to tear up the roots of their profession of His name. With it emblazoned on their banners they were ready to march to the martyr's grave. There is not much in a name, some say. The old Greek may have thus spoken; but not the old Roman. By names he impressed upon his offspring patriotic principles, and inspired him to noble deeds. The Christian may talk that way concerning all other names but that of Jesus. With it in his mind are associated the most marvelous history, the grandest display of philanthropic affection, and the sweetest thoughts. The memories that are present in the mind of the true Christian on the mention of this name, are tender and mellowing. What sweetness there is in it when the heart is bitter! What music there is in it when the soul is sad! What power there is in it when hell assails! What influence there is in it when used before heaven's throne! The honor of this name is entrusted to the church. It should be faithful to it, by professing it; preaching it; defending it.

"Dear name! the rock on which I build,  
My shield and hiding place;  
My never-failing treasure, filled  
With boundless stores of grace!"

3. *They displayed noteworthy patience.* Their trials arose from more than one cause. The Jews looked upon them as outcasts. They taught that only the descendants of Abraham were the people of God. This exclusiveness was most mischievous in its influence in the early church. Many were tempted to conform to

Jewish requirements that they might be numbered among God's people. This teaching of the Jews at Philadelphia was a source of great trial to the Christians, and required much patience to endure its insults and overcome its misleading influences. This kind of teaching is common in certain quarters to-day; and sometimes it is most insulting.

But their patience was further shown in their unflagging energy in the face of opposition. It would seem from our Lord's utterances that opposition was offered to their entering doors of usefulness. Why is He so emphatic in saying that no one could shut the door He would open for them, if there had not been efforts made to shut doors that had already been opened to them? Their bitter enemies, the Jews, may have used many ways to prevent this church from having any Christly influence over the minds of the heathen in their city. They may have done so by misrepresentation, by contemptuous treatment, by persecution. But amid all the circumstances in which this church was situated, it was loyal to Jesus. Treated as aliens to the family of God, hampered, embarrassed in working for their Master, the objects of most zealous efforts to dissuade from faith in Christ, yet patiently they kept the word of their Saviour, and were unswervingly faithful to His name.

V. HE SPEAKS OF HIS PURPOSES AS TO THE ENEMIES AND TEMPTATIONS OF THIS CHURCH. "Behold, I will make them to come and worship at thy feet," etc. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation." The enemies of this church are spoken of in such languages as to make them appear most darksome in

character. 1. *They were of the synagogue of Satan.* They belonged to a church; but it was the devil's. They were religious; but its kind may be inferred from their synagogue. The greatest cruelties that have been perpetrated on God's people in the centuries have been perpetrated by religious people, and in the name of religion. 2. *They were lying.* They said they were Jews; but they were such only in name. They misrepresented the true children of Abraham. True circumcision is that of the heart. Lying through false profession has done great injury to Christ's cause.

Now over these enemies this church was to have great triumph. "Behold," says Christ, "I will make them to come and to worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." The victories of the church are Christ's, though He uses instrumentality to achieve them. What great things He can do! He can turn a Saul, full of hate and cruelty, into a Paul, full of admiration and self-sacrificing love. Some, at least, of these disciples of Satan were yet to become servants of Christ. Christ subdues the church's enemies by *His personal agency, the operations of the Holy Ghost, the power of His truth over the lives and hearts of men.*

But, more, Christ expresses His purpose in this letter to keep this church from the hour of temptation which was coming. What hour is here meant? Does it mean the persecutions that worked such havoc among Christians throughout the Roman empire under Trajan and other emperors? Does it refer to a great convulsion of nature? We are not informed as to the character of the temptation that was coming. But these things are said about it: 1. *It was to be far-*

*reaching. 2. It was to be limited in time. 3. It was to be testing in its purpose.* Now, over the Christians of Philadelphia Christ was to have special care. "I will keep thee," He said, "from the hour of temptation." O how He can keep!

VI. HE SPEAKS OF THE DUTIES INCUMBENT ON THIS CHURCH. These duties were two-fold. 1. *They were to keep a tenacious hold on what they had as Christians.* The accession of Jews to their numbers might endanger their views of Christ and His religion. Judaizing teachers would ever be zealous to argue them out of their faith; or persuade them in other ways to abandon it. But it was their duty to hold on to it with a deathlike grip, as their only hope. 2. *They were to overcome.* This implies fighting. But they were to win. Christ always expects His soldiers to overcome the foe. There is no reason for defeat in the warfare of the soul.

VII. HE SPEAKS OF THE SUBLIME DESTINY OF THE FAITHFUL OF THIS CHURCH. We get a conception of the vastness and glory of the distant star from the astronomer's words, who through his telescope has made that distant orb his study; but how poor that conception is of the real grandeur and magnitude of that distant orb. We get some conception of the greatness and glory of the Christian's destiny from the words of inspired men; but O how poor is that conception compared with the reality. Human language is too poor a medium to set it forth even if the human mind were able to comprehend its description. Put into what our text says all the might of imagina-

tion and who can conceive all that is implied in its words.

1. *Christians have a crown awaiting them.* Let no man take thy crown, said Jesus to this church. The chaplet of flowers put on the head of the Grecian victor may here be referred to; but what does the crown it typifies imply? Something far grander than ever was won in Grecian contests, or put upon the head of king or queen. It is a crown of life, which entitles to all the glories of heaven. Not until it can be shown what these glories mean, can it be told what the crown that is awaiting the Christian implies. O if we keep a tight hold on what we have through Jesus Christ of truth, and Christian experience, on our poor heads, in the presence of the great ones of heaven, and the assembled throngs of the ages, God Himself will put the promised crown!

2. *They are to have positions of distinction and importance in the divine temple.* At the beginning of this letter Jesus speaks of Himself as having the keys of the house of David. Therefore He has all authority of that house. In the reward He bestows upon the victorious He shows His authority, for He it is who makes them pillars in the house of God. Thus dealing with them, He gives them place and position. A pillar is more than an ordinary part of a structure. The faithful to Jesus amid life's severe trials shall have in the temple of heaven more than an ordinary position. It is not against our conceptions of heaven to think there are degrees in glory there. All who reach heaven from earth shall do so through the merits of the Atoning Lamb of God; but it does seem



as if Jesus teaches in the letters to these churches that they shall have places of peculiar prominence therein, who with martyr-like fidelity have served Him. As pillars are objects of beauty and admiration, so in the upper temple to the eyes of Cherubim and Seraphim, angels and archangels, the heroes of the Cross shall be objects of admiration.

3. *They shall ever have glorious assurances.* Whatever is written on them by Jesus, is written in their minds and hearts. They have therefore the greatest assurance of these things. 1. Christ says, "I will write upon him the name of my God." This writing implies possessorship. He on whom God's name is written belongs to God; and therefore, he on whom this writing is done has the assurance that he belongs to God. Blessed assurance! ever to know we are the Lord's. 2. Christ says, "I will write on him the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." Then he will ever have the assurance that the New Jerusalem is his city. Jesus gives him the assurance that he has an eternal title to all its privileges. 3. Christ further says, "I will write upon him my new name." And what is His new name if it be not Saviour? It is His new name in heaven. But to have His new name written on us means that we are His through His saving grace.

Let the example of this Church spur us to be more faithful to our Lord; and let the prospects of the honors and glories to come, cheer us while yet we have to battle, and suffer, and weep, and toil.



THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."—Rev. iii. 14-22.

## THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA.

Laodicea was so named by Antiochus II, in honor of his wife Laodicea. It was first called Diospolis, after its tutelary deity Zeus. It was a large city in the southwest of Phrygia, situated on the river Lycus, a branch of the Maeander. It was not only large, but very wealthy. Standing as it did on one of the great Roman roads which led to Damascus, the traffic which passed through it greatly enriched its inhabitants. These boasted of their riches, which they must have had in abundance, for, they were able after a fearful disaster occasioned by one of those earthquakes that wrought such ruin in that region, to repair their disaster without outside help. Its present name is Eskehissar, but its former glory has passed away. Our interest is attracted to this place only because of the church which existed there in the early centuries. It was perhaps one of the earliest founded by the Apostles; but who the immediate founder was there is no definite information. It is thought that Epaphras, who lived at Colossae, only about six or eight miles from Laodicea, planted the church in this place. In the time of Paul this church was in a flourishing condition. He makes two or three references to it in the Epistle to the Colossians, as that epistle was not only intended for Colossae, but also for Heirapolis and Laodicea. It is thought by some that Paul wrote an epistle to this church; and one exists purporting to have been written by him; but it is

evidently a forgery. This church held a prominent place for many years. Here was held one of the important councils at which the Canon of the Scriptures was settled, and in the fifth century we have the record of its bishop holding a prominent place. But it is no more. Hardly a Christian can be found in the near neighborhood of the city's ancient site. Both city and church have gone. Now, Laodicae was one of the Seven Churches to which Christ wrote. The letter to this church differs from all the others, in that Christ has not a commendatory word to say about it.

Let us consider Christ in regard to this church, as He sets Himself forth in this letter.

I. HE WAS ACCURATELY ACQUAINTED WITH IT. In order to accurate acquaintance there must be the fullest knowledge. But this knowledge implies the keenest insight into the object known and the clearest vision. Accurate acquaintance does not admit of ignorance, imperfection of judgment. He who knows a man must be able to discern the thoughts and the intents of his heart. That Jesus was fully acquainted with this church is evident from the description He gives of Himself. 1. He is the "Amen." This is a new name by which He calls Himself; but it is deeply significant. It means that He is the True One. Then His knowledge is in harmony with truth. What He thinks is in perfect accord with reality. He does not use an adjective that is not an exact characterization. What He predicts is as certain to happen as if it had already transpired. 2. He is "the faithful and true Witness." He gives Himself another name; but it is not so new a one. Isaiah calls Him a "Witness;"

and He speaks of Himself as bearing witness to the truth. He is so thoroughly acquainted with His subject that in whatever He says there may be the most implicit confidence. His knowledge is absolute. 3. He is "the Beginning of the Creation of God." Arianism has seized upon this part of Christ's description of Himself as teaching the finiteness of His nature. But it has not been able to maintain its position. The word translated beginning may be rendered beginner. He was at the beginning of Creation as its Beginner; He is the Source of all being. This is He whose eye beheld the state and conduct of the Laodicean Church. Could aught escape its gaze? Did not He see things just as they were?

"Lord, all I am is known to Thee;  
 In vain my soul would try  
 To shun Thy presence, or to flee  
 The notice of Thine eye.  
 Thy all-surrounding sight surveys  
 My rising and my rest,  
 My public walks, my private ways,  
 The secrets of my breast."

II. HE WAS DISGUSTED WITH IT. It is not social condition that unpleasantly affects Christ; neither is it personal appearance. It is moral condition of a certain character. There is nothing more delights Him than to see His followers ardent in their love for Him, and enthusiastic in promoting the advancement of His kingdom in the hearts of others. But there is nothing that so disgustingly affects Him as a professed Christian or a church that is lukewarm. We have not much respect for one who has no decision of character; who is on the fence always. And a Christian

whose conduct does not clearly and emphatically commit him to Christ has a poor standing in the latter's estimation. Christ wants individuals and churches to be "hot" for Him. To be without the fire of love for Him pains Him. But to be neither cold nor hot is to be in that insipid state, that is nauseating to Him. Several things may be said about this state of things in a church.

1. *It might not be expected.* Upon what rational grounds may we reason that a church may become lukewarm? We may find good grounds to reason that a man hale and healthy may become sick and die; but we can find no reasonable grounds from which to reason that a church on fire with love for Christ, may become lukewarm. It is a condition that might not be looked for; but rather the very contrary might reasonably be expected. The knowledge of Christ as a Saviour should set all the nature aflame with love for Him, and this fire ought to increase in intenseness, rather than abate. If first knowledge of Jesus makes the fire of affection to burn, increasing knowledge, and the larger bestowals of His love, should make that fire increasingly ardent. The lukewarmness of a church must shock the angels with its incongruity to reason.

2. *It is injurious to the interests of the soul.* Whatever is inimical to the soul's advancement in the stature of Christ, must be considered injurious. Surely that state that is hateful to Him must be considered as inimical, and so injurious. To succeed in study, business—any line of life, the enthusiasm of red-hot earnestness is needed; if business, or study, is pursued half-heartedly, success need not be expected.



So if the business of the soul has no "push" in it, no enthusiasm, it will not advance. What is more to be deplored than for a soul to sink into that state in which its very temperature is injurious to its growth?

3. *It is a state of things in which religion is not enjoyed.* Religion is enjoyable. It is an experience of blessings from the heart of God, through Jesus Christ. How can such an experience be enjoyed by him, or a church, that is offensive to Christ. The enjoyment of religion is the enjoyment of Christ; but there is no enjoyment of Christ by him whom Christ does not enjoy. Peace and joy come through Christ; but surely neither that man, nor church, can enjoy those blessings whose conduct is disgusting to Christ. It is possible to be self-satisfied, very complacent as we look upon ourselves as professing Christians, and yet at the same time to be in that state of soul that makes it impossible for us to enjoy religion.

4. *It is inimical to the advance of Christ's kingdom among men.* The warm atmosphere that surrounds the path of the genuine Christian is more powerful than logic to convince poor sinners in whose souls winter reigns, that religion that can break up this wintriness, and warm their soul, is just what they need. People may like cold to harden the ponds and rivers, for skating on; but they always dislike to meet with spiritual chilliness in a church. Lukewarmness in religion never impresses men that religion is a thing about which they need show much concern.

5. *It is a result of cause or causes.* Was the lukewarmness of Laodicean Christians traceable to the influence of false doctrines, which the Apostle exposes in

his epistle to the Colossians? or, was it their wealth that induced this state? Whatever it was, it was no doubt apparent. It is not difficult to find out the cause of a church's decline in religious fervor.

6. *It is a state difficult to rectify.* Easier by far to lead men whose hearts have been devoid of the love of God, to the footstool of mercy, than to lead self-complacent, self-satisfied Christians who are entirely devoid of the spirit of Christ, to give themselves anew to God. They are generally impervious to argument.

7. *It is a state not reached immediately.* A man is not in the enjoyment of the warmth of divine love in his soul to-day, and to-morrow lukewarm. This state comes on by degrees; in some cases more rapidly than others. As thus we consider this state into which this church had lapsed, we see a condition of things that affected Christ with utter disgust.

III. HE EXPOSES THE SELF-DECEPTIVENESS OF THIS CHURCH. Christianity in Laodicea was not looked down on because of its poverty. It was evidently a rich church. Rich merchants belonged to it; people that lived in beautiful homes. Their church was perhaps in keeping with their wealth. Their large means gave them social standing. They were proud of their position, and were pleased to boast of their affluence. Besides being well off temporally, they adjudged themselves as well off spiritually; but their self-deception was exposed by Christ. His exposition of their self-deception impresses us with at least two facts.

1. *We may fancy ourselves in an exalted condition of grace, when in fact no such condition is ours.* Men may fancy themselves wealthy who are not worth a

dollar, and men may fancy themselves spiritually rich who are the veriest paupers. Men may look upon themselves as standing high in the kingdom of God, while at the same time they are wretches, in the most miserable state. Deception as to soul conditions is not uncommon.

2. *It is vitally important that we come to know ourselves just as we really are.* How terrible must have been the results if to itself the condition of the Laodicean church had not been exposed? How many benefited by the exposition we know not; but this we know that as long as a false notion holds possession of the mind a right one has no place in it. And a false notion of one's spiritual condition, if that condition be bad, may be followed by the saddest consequences. High notions of self that are without foundation, are as mountains in the way of true progress. What a mercy it is for a man to be shown up to himself? What a mercy for a church?

IV. HE IS OUTSIDE OF THIS CHURCH. It is Christ in a church that makes it Christian, it is Christ in a man that makes him worthy of the same character. Christ was at one time in the church at Laodicea. Then it was genuinely Christian; but when this letter was written He was not within it. In this connection there are two facts worthy of our thought.

1. *Christ was without this church not of His own choice.* The Laodiceans either ejected Him, or so conducted themselves that He could not dwell within them. He desires man as His habitation.

2. *Christ without this church was the reason that no good thing could be said about it.* There is not one of

the other churches to whom Christ wrote, about which something good is not said; but there is nothing good said about this one. The heart or church from which Christ is excluded, has nothing good in it, or as the outcome of it, that He will praise. What folly to exclude Christ? Better ten thousand times shut out the sun from our dwelling. O we fear there are churches to-day that are Christless, as we know there are souls!

V. HE IS KINDLY DISPOSED TOWARD THIS CHURCH. Would it be a matter of wonder if He should turn away from this church so disgusting to Him? But He does not. See the evidences of His kind regard for it.

1. *He counsels them.* "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," etc. Buy these things and they so poor! Yes; buy without money. The riches, the garments, the medicines of the soul may be had without money. They are bought from Jesus Himself. But he purchased them to bestow them without price on earnest seekers. What coin could value them? Where is there in the universe a treasury that could buy an anointing of this eye salve? Poor and naked and blind as are these morally wretched Laodiceans, Jesus desires that they become wealthy, dressed in the robes of righteousness, and clear of vision.

2. *He inferentially tells them He loves them.* "As many as I love I rebuke." His rebukes were evidences of His affection for them. He does not talk as He does in this letter through passion, but because of love. By His sternness, and expressions of disgust would He arouse them to a right consciousness of their condition.

3. *He waits at the door of this church that He may be admitted again.* He says, "I have taken up my stand at the door." So desirous is He of again taking possession that He waits, as if determined He shall gain an entrance. Is not here condescension that could only exist where love is great? He even offers inducements to be admitted. "If any man will open the door I will come into him and will sup with him, and he with me." Marvelous truth! He will become the guest of an object of disgust, a miserable wretch, one whose conduct has nauseated Him, and He will sup with him. Astounding fact! He will make a man who is poor, and blind, and naked, His guest, and set him down with Him to the table He Himself spread, if he will only let Him into his soul. O, how He loves even those whose conduct is most horrible to Him! Men admit Him into their souls when they earnestly repent of their sins.

VI. HE SETS BEFORE THIS CHURCH A GLORIOUS, POSSIBLE FUTURE. If we had only the first part of this letter, we never could come to this point by our reasoning. The dismal condition of this church there set forth would lead us to conclude that it was doomed. But Jesus can see in a corrupt church possibilities of improvement, as He can see them in a corrupt man, which we would not dream of. He never doubts His own ability to make out of an apparently hopeless man, or church, something glorious, if that man, or church, will only give Him the opportunity He asks. Look at the glorious future that was possible to this church through Jesus.

1. *It was possible for its members to become moral*

*conquerors.* These people, so low in Christ's esteem, might yet rise to such dignity of soul as to crush beneath them the influences that had degraded them. It only requires the change of Christ's relationship to a man to make him an abject slave, or conqueror grander than an Alexander. Let Christ come into his heart, and He will inspire and help any man to become the latter.

2. *It was possible for its members to become enthroned.* What! Was is possible for any of those who were so horrible in their conduct, as to be loathsome to Christ, to rise to the exalted position of a seat with Him on the throne to which He had been exalted through His conquest? Yes, gloriously possible. From what depths may man through Jesus Christ rise to the highest heights! He who has been wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, may rise to the throne of moral conquest; he may sway the sceptre over his own nature in accord with his own conscience and the will of God. He may be king in the sublimest sense. He may in the hereafter wear a crown of true regal splendor, enjoy the divinest fellowships, and reign forever.

In conclusion, learn: 1. *That we are under the eye of One who will witness for or against us, according to the absolute truth in our case.* 2. *The need of personal introspection in the light of God's word, that we be not self-deceived as to the condition of our souls.* 3. *That a lukewarm church is worthy of the most contemptuous treatment.* 4. *That though a man or church may have sunken low, there may yet be for both a glorious future.* A church's future; yours; mine; depends upon our treatment of Jesus Christ.

CHRIST AT THE DOOR.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me."—Rev. 3:20.



## CHRIST AT THE DOOR.

This is a common text. Who has not heard it preached from again and again? Why not take one less discussed, some one may say, and let us have something new; for nothing that we have not heard often can be said on that text. But why should such an utterance have weight? Are not some of the portions of this Book that are looked upon as worn-out texts among the richest and sweetest of them all? Their music ever charms the thoughtful soul. He who prizes the great truths of Revelation never tires hearing them dwelt upon. They are friends whom he ever loves to meet. We have heard the bells of Shandon; we would hear them often. Times that we cannot count we have heard the sweet tones of our text as they have sounded forth from the sacred place; we would hear them again, and never tire hearing them; for has heaven ever heard anything that should by earth be considered sweeter, and more soul-delighting, than the words of man's Divine Lord: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me?" Art has been captured by the picture there is in these words, and its genius has been summoned to its best endeavor. Have we not ourselves reproduced this picture and placed it in the most sacred chamber of the soul? We have stood before it in our most contemplative mood, and while thinking on its

great teachings, we have heard the Spouse in the ancient song singing most tenderly, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." But we have been, perhaps, more deeply impressed with the notes of the more recent singer whose strains we often reiterate:

"In the silent midnight watches,  
List! thy bosom door!  
How it knocketh—knocketh—knocketh—  
Knocketh evermore!  
Say not 'tis thy pulse is beating:  
'Tis thy heart of sin;  
'Tis thy Saviour knocks and crieth,  
'Rise, and let me in.'"

We never weary looking at this picture. There is no production of genius that can displace it in our souls; while the words that set it forth never fail to fill us with gratitude and wonder as we ponder them. In again making them the subject of our consideration, we remark—

I. THAT THE MISSION OF CHRIST TO MEN IS TO ENTER AND TAKE POSSESSION OF THEIR SOULS. The human heart needed light on some of its deepest problems; and Jesus gave that light; but it was not to be a mere teacher of men that Jesus came to earth. Moral night, black as Erebus, had settled over the nations, in the darkness of which men could not see the character of sin. The lives of those who were considered examples to be copied were marked by traits that most disfigured them, and made them unfit for men to follow. Jesus Christ by His teachings and life exposed the character of sin, and set an example for the world

to follow. But His mission to men was not merely to reveal sin's character to them, and show them how to live. He has a larger purpose to accomplish. He came that He might make a life of the highest kind possible to them. He became a man that He might incarnate Himself in all men.

1. *He came to enter man that He might be life to him.* Men are spiritually dead; they show all the symptoms of their sad condition. Jesus says: "I am the life;" and His mission to earth is to carry that life into the souls of men.

2. *His mission is to enter man as his ruler.* Under the despots that rule men's souls, they are wrecked and ruined. In order to harmony with God and themselves, and that they enjoy the truest progress, it is necessary to all that those despots be dethroned, and the Divine rule instituted instead. This Jesus has come to accomplish. He wants to enter into the souls of men that He may rule them.

3. *His mission is to enter men that He may engross their affections, engage their thought, and be to them the source of truest bliss.*

What contrasts there are between Christianity and all other religions? Its essence is a Divine Personality, and to embrace it is to open the door of the soul and admit that Personality.

These facts cast light on what constitutes a genuine Christian. If numbers of people professing to be Christians were to examine themselves amid this light, they would either abandon their profession, or repent of the folly of their assumed standing, and cry earnestly to Jesus to enter and take possession of their souls.

It is a truth that cannot be too much emphasized that the mission of Christ is only realized when He enters and occupies the soul.

II. THAT MANY TO WHOM CHRIST HAS COME ARE NOT DISPOSED TO ADMIT HIM INTO THEIR HEARTS. This is an astounding truth, and how apparent. The lives of numbers about us show it; for they are the very contrary of all our conceptions of Christly living.

Man has much to do with his own eternal welfare. He has the power to keep God out of his nature; and, irrespective of the consequences, he uses that power. Why does he do so—what explanation can be given of such conduct?

1. *With many it is the case that they do not wish to give up the kind of life they are living.* Places of pleasure would have to be abandoned, or certain associations broken up. The theatre often stands in the way of Christ entering the heart.

2. *Some are too busy to give any attention to Jesus.* They are so busy with worldly affairs that they have not time to show respect for their Lord. 'Their souls' interest are of no moment apparently to them; the world only has any title to their respect. What will the retrospect of such lives be from the sick and dying bed?

3. *Many others are disinterested.* The thought of their souls' interests never holds their attention ■ minute. It is with them as if there were no soul-concerns to have their attention. The intelligence that Jesus wants to enter their hearts is pushed aside as a matter in which they do not want to be concerned.

4. *There are those who refuse to receive Him, be-*

*cause they do not believe in Him.* For these and many other reasons Jesus is excluded from the hearts of very many men. O how glorious is He Whom they keep out! What an errand He has come on to them! From what heights He has come down to reach them! What folly they are guilty of who thus treat Jesus? What base ingratitude is theirs? What reasons for eternal remorse they are making?

III. THAT GREAT AS IS THE INSULT MEN GIVE CHRIST BY KEEPING HIM OUT OF THEIR HEARTS, IT DOES NOT DRIVE HIM AWAY FROM THEM. If a great personage were to call at our house and we were to refuse him an entrance, how incensed he would become, and how quickly he would leave our door. When we think of the greatness of Christ, must not the treatment men give Him astonish even perdition; yet notwithstanding their insults, He stands at the door of their hearts and knocks for an entrance. Nor does He confine Himself to any one door of the soul; for the soul has many doors; but failing at one, He turns to another.

1. *He knocks at the door of reason.* Christ appeals to men's intellect. He has His mighty arguments, especially those which His life and works furnish, which no logic can overthrow. Let any one heed His appeals to reason, and he will open the door of his soul and invite Him in.

2. *He knocks at the door of self-interest.* Every man is supposed to be interested in himself. For his present and eternal good it is necessary for every man to admit Christ into his soul. Without such possession,

life will be deprived of its highest blessings, and the future of any hope of good.

And He does not always knock at the same door, so also does He not always knock in the same way.

1. *Often, quite often, He knocks by His Word.* How often you have heard Him knock in this way. As you have read it in the Bible, or heard it expounded from the sacred desk, you have been so deeply impressed by it that you have felt that you should accept the Saviour it sets forth.

2. *Sometimes He knocks by afflictions.* By reverses in business; diseases; bereavements, Jesus knocks to gain an entrance into the heart of men. How often His providences are misunderstood!

3. *Especially by the operations of the Holy Spirit does He seek to gain an entrance into the souls of men.*

How profoundly interested Jesus is in men. He knows their worth and vast possibilities; and besides, they are related to Him as no other beings are.

IV. THAT THE MOST GLORIOUS EVENTS TAKE PLACE WHEN CHRIST IS ADMITTED INTO THE SOUL. Man can keep Christ out of his soul; but he can also let Him into it. The grandest deed a man can do for himself is to admit Christ into his soul. Such an act is the first step towards the highest manhood and heaven. Glorious events occur when this advent takes place.

1. *He becomes the guest of him whose heart He enters.* How changed are men's attitude towards Christ when they receive Him. When He is only the subject of intellectual contemplation, there may be no warmth of affection for Him; but when He enters the soul there is more than mental regard for Him, there is

great warmth of love. But what have we in our hearts to please Him? Can He find any delight in our imperfect piety? His supping with us shows His great regard for us; He is not estranged from us, nor are we from Him; and more than this, our devotion as His followers is pleasing to Him. He finds delight in what we already are, as His disciples.

2. *He becomes his Host.* What glorious provision He spreads before men! What abundance of the good things of heaven for souls to feast on! What strength is gotten at His table! Here the heroes and heroines of the ages who wrought such marvelous things for Christ got the ability for their achievements.

In Conclusion: 1. To have religion in the soul is to have Christ there. 2. It is to have Christ there, not as a tyrant; but as a Guest and a Host—a Guest, having the highest place in our thoughts, our affections, our ambitions; a Host, partaking of the bounties of His grace, and delighting in the manifestations of His love. 3. If Christ be not in the soul then our claim to be called Christians is taken away, whatever may be our respect for religion, or the institutions thereof.





SPIRITUAL INTROSPECTION.

"And they were full of eyes."—Rev. 4:8.

## SPIRITUAL INTROSPECTION.

Who were these wondrous beings so full of eyes? There have been many answers to this question; but it is still asked. There are some things said about them that would at least tend to limit our thought concerning them, and make many of the interpretations given of them impossible of acceptance. It is admitted that the four-and-twenty elders that are seated on thrones around Jehovah's throne, are representatives of the saints of the Old and New Testament; but the four living ones, translated beasts, lead those in the worship of heaven; for when they worship, the elders fall before the throne and worship also. These living ones were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. They say, as they adore the Lamb, "thou has redeemed us." It would follow that these living creatures cannot be "symbolic forms used as vision emblems of grand and mysterious Divine powers developed in the great forces of nature, emblems perfectly fitted to the cloudy splendors and vast perspective of prophecy." Neither can they be considered as representing anything devoid of life, or that has not been redeemed by the Lamb. They cannot mean cherubim or seraphim; for if they are exalted beings of the angel hierarchy, they were never redeemed. We think that these four living creatures are representatives of our race, so exalted through the salvation of the Lamb that they are constant attendants on the Divine throne; and, appreciating the marvels

that have been wrought in them, they weary not in ascribing praise to the Triune Deity. As the Seer gazed upon these living ones, he was impressed with several features in them: he was impressed with their faces, their wings, and their eyes. As to the latter feature: they could see behind them; for they were full of eyes behind; they could see before them, for they were full of eyes before; they could see within, for they were full of eyes within. What vision was theirs! Do these strange forms, whom no man can describe, represent redeemed man in exalted positions in heaven? If so, it must be admitted that their vision is vastly superior to ours, but though this be true, yet, while we may not have as many eyes as they have, we have, nevertheless, the power to look backward and forward, and also inward. We have the power to look within ourselves. We have the faculty of introspection, and to this fact we ask your attention. Concerning it we remark:

I. THAT IT IS A DISTINGUISHING FEATURE OF MAN. He can look within himself; he can take cognizance of his mental states, his dispositions. He can see through himself as through a house; what furniture there is therein; what pictures; whether its apartments are clean; whether they are such as he would like his friends to see, or God to look into. He can look within him as into a garden, to see what is growing therein, whether its soil is producing the fruits of the Spirit, or whether its yield is only thorns and briars and thistles. He can look into himself as into a kingdom, and see what is upon the throne thereof, and who or what has most to say therein. This is a remarkable faculty.

The beasts of the field have it not. The lion never pauses to look at what is in his heart. The eagle never stops in her flight towards the sun to return to her rocky eyrie that with wings at rest she may turn her eye in upon herself and acquaint herself of her inner condition. But man may turn aside from the toils and walks of life, from the society of men, and, turning his eyes inward, occupy his thought with the scenes of the inner world of himself. We remark—

II. THAT THIS IS A MOST IMPORTANT FACULTY TO MAN. That it is most important that man be able to see within himself will appear if we consider some facts.

I. *It is within a man that his Without originates.* The cathedral is within Michael Angelo before it is upon its foundations, the place where devout worshippers throng. The picture is within a Raphael before it takes its place among the masterpieces of the painters. How necessary that Angelo see his cathedral and Raphael his picture, before they become realities in the outer world! The world that is outside of men so far as it is human in its creation, was first within them. The palace of the architect, the invention of the inventor, the scene of the dramatist, the book of the writer, the song of the poet, the plans apparent in business. How necessary for a man to be able to see within himself that he may control what shall be the expression of his life! What is in a man's inner world will come out of him to form his outer world; and if he do not have his eye on that inner world, things may be allowed to come out that may make his life one of

sorrow to himself, and perhaps a curse to his fellows. Consider—

2. *It is what is within a man that determines his standing with God.* God does not form His estimate of a man by what is around him or by what he does with hand or voice. He forms his estimate of him by what he sees within him. God looks at a man's heart—into his heart; as is its condition so his standing with Him. Men may do grand deeds, for which the church may applaud them, and be ready to give them an assurance of heaven; and yet at the same time, God may frown upon such, because He sees there is evil within them. The Judge of men to form His estimate of them, does not look on the outward appearance. Since then the within condition of a man should have his special attention, does not the importance of this faculty of introspection appear? Consider further—

3. *It is within a man that the enemies of his being lurk.* Our foes do not come against us with the regimentals of hell on them, marching to the beat of the drum. No; they steal into us; they lurk in secret places of the soul, awaiting their opportunity to injure us. Where are to be found the spirits of evil habits; where are to be found evil desires, evil passions, evil thoughts, avarice, pride—where? How necessary to be able to look within and detect these foes that we may cast them out. Again—

4. *It is within a man that the fortifications of his nature are.* God has erected in every man such fortifications. It is not an easy thing for his foes to conquer him. There is strength of love for truth and purity and righteousness manifested that repels the assaults

of his spiritual foes. How necessary that his eyes be upon his fortifications that no breach be allowed to be made in them, or if made, to remain unrepaired! Lastly—

5. *It is from within a man the forces that make him and move the world come.* Thought makes the man—"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Thought moves the world. How necessary that a man have the power of surveillance of his thoughts! We again remark concerning this faculty of introspection—

III. THAT IT IS A FACULTY THAT SHOULD BE USED BY ALL MEN. The eyes by which we see the outer world are great blessings, and should be used. But the eyes by which we seen within us are even greater blessings, and should be used. If men were to use this faculty their lives would be greatly affected by what they should see within themselves. Think of this—

1. *What would the ungodly man see within himself, and what would the sight lead him to do?*

2. *What would the godly man see within himself?* The question is a most important one. Let us change its form—what should he see? He should see a clean heart, a right spirit, love for God. He should see the throne of his being occupied by Jesus Christ, and all the powers of his nature His ministers. Sinner and saint should use this God-given power; for thus may they have a true conception of their relation to God, and the duty they owe to themselves. Consider lastly—

IV. THAT THIS FACULTY IS MUCH UNUSED, AND OFTEN WRONGLY USED. The world engages the physical eyes of men so much that many of them neglect their inner vision altogether. These appear utterly oblivious

to the fact that the world within them is of infinitely greater importance to them than the world about them, and that it should have their most solicitous attention. Its non-use has serious consequences.

1. *Sinners remain in their sins.* They do not know their condition.

2. *Mere formalists remain ignorant of their real condition.* Their religion is a mere externalism. Let them look at their hearts, and they will become alarmed.

3. *Hypocrites remain at ease in their imposition.* They have never had a glance at the condition of their hearts.

4. *Christians retain roots of evil in them.* If the followers of Christ were to keep their eyes more than they do on their inner selves, they would discover roots of bitterness, and other evil things, that detract from Christian character, and lessen the enjoyment of the Christian life.

But this faculty may be misused. Men may look within themselves in the light of what people think of them, or of their own conceptions of right and duty. They may look at themselves with eyes affected by the glare of the world, so that they may not see things aright. This faculty may be used in the spirit of the times, and inner conditions may take their coloring therefrom. Rightly to use this faculty, we should ask God's Spirit to clear it, that it may be able to see things clearly, and with vision thus cleared we should look within ourselves often, using only the light of the Word of God, and of His Spirit.

If with such vision we should see our inner selves under such light, what would we behold in us?



THE THRONE OF GOD.

"Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne."—Rev. 4:2.

## THE THRONE OF GOD.

In the happy days when creation was young all the gates of heaven were open earthward. Through them resounded the joyful shout of the Sons of God, while the morning stars sang. In those early times were Eden's happy days. Then God visited man and communed with him. But there came an end to Eden's joys and sunny prospects. Man by his own deeds despoiled himself, and in consequence night came into his soul. How foul his act! It was enough to turn God forever away from him, and shut every portal of the skies against him. But how glad we are that whatever were the immediate results of his transgression, heaven has not been forever closed to us. It often opens to earth. From it have come the greatest blessings that the world enjoys. Through its open gates we see by faith scenes that entrance us; we behold visions that make the soul long to be forever with the Lord.

Wonderful were the sights John beheld through the open door of heaven. But there was one upon which his gaze centred that must have been of surpassing magnificence; it was the throne of God, with its mysterious surroundings. It seemed to be the centre of heaven's attraction, as, indeed, it is the centre of all things. They tell us there is a place in the universe around which the suns and systems that make up the shining galaxies revolve. Is not this centre the throne John saw? Let us meditate on this throne.

I. IT IS OCCUPIED BY A PERSON. "One sat on the throne." Nations in our times have had vacant thrones, to choose occupants for which they earnestly scrutinized families of royalty. But this is not a vacant throne John speaks of. God is the occupant thereof. How great is He in power, in wisdom, in justice, in holiness!

From the teachings of some it would not appear that this throne is occupied by a Person; but rather by an impersonal something, which they call force, or law. Law with them is everything. Law is the former of the earth and heavens. Law is the originator of beast and man. Law orders everything and will not bend to the voice of anyone. Law is supreme, beside which there is no king.

But this enthronement of law in the place of Deity is one of the most irrational acts the intellect of man has been guilty of. What is law? Looked at as the only explanation they can give of existing forms and order of nature who reject a personal ruler of the universe, it is a mere hypothesis, and should not be so loudly talked about. For such an hypothesis affords not the desired explanation.

It cannot explain the successive creations of animal and vegetable life that have taken place in our world. Entirely new races have come into being. "The growth of new systems out of old ones, without the mediation of Divine power, is absurd," says Newton.

It cannot explain the stability of material objects and the harmony of nature. We say the moon has influence upon the oceans of the earth, and that the sun controls its motions. But it is a principle in philosophy

that nothing can act where it is not. How, then, can moon and sun act upon the earth? Can a law be absent from that in which it adheres? There must be found some other explanation than mere law, as the materialist views it, for the order of nature and its very stability.

But let it be answered that nature's laws are God's way of doing things, that they are the rules according to which He works, and reason and Scripture will approve the answer.

There is One upon the throne; then it is not blind, heartless, soulless, insensible law, that we have to do with; but a Person, who is possessed in the most perfect degree of all the characteristics of nature that inspire the fullest obedience to His mandates, and to Himself the highest adoration and worship of the soul. Again:

II. IT IS THE SEAT OF UNIVERSAL DOMINION. This throne rules over all.

1. *Over all thrones.* There are many seats of power in earth. The occupants of not a few think not of a superior. But over the mightiest this throne exercises dominion. It is He who occupies it who raises one and casts down another. While thrones serve Him, He uses them; but casts them to the dust when He can use them no more. That ruler is wise who bends to the sceptre of the King of kings. It rules

2. *Over all minds.* This often does not appear. How men have defamed Him, and reasoned against Him! How they have frantically contended against Him! In our days how antagonistic the mind of many

are to the truths He has revealed, truths by which He intends to lift up the world! But how marvelously He has used men's opposings to advance His cause! He has made the intellectual wrath of men to praise Him. He has been, and is, controlling the intellect of men, so that His glory and the impregnability of His truth have appeared, and are appearing more grandly to the eyes of intelligent men everywhere. It rules

3. *Over the minute as well as the vast.* There is not a sun in any part of space that is not under the rule of this throne; nor is there a grain of dust in any crevice of the universe that is not under the same control. In the fact that this throne is universal in its rule may be seen the philosophy of history, the cause of the phenomena of nature, and reason to believe that all things are being directed to Divine ends.

"That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy'd,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.

"That not a worm is cloven in vain;  
That not a moth with vain desire  
Is shrivel'd in a fruitless fire,  
Or but subserves another's gain."—*Tennyson*.

III. IT IS PROFOUNDLY INTERESTED IN MAN. The government of this throne is universal; but its rule shows special interest in man. This interest is shown by several facts.

1. *Its laws are adapted to secure the highest interests of man.* These laws are expressions of the Divine heart as to how man should live. They are as necessary to the growth of man upward and Godward, as

are the forces of development in the oak necessary to its growth.

2. *Its rule is ever benevolent in its aim.* The King that occupies this throne rules not for His own good; but ever for the good of the ruled. The evil there is in the world is largely caused by man himself. Sin is here. Sin that saddens and destroys.

"Not all the luminaries quenched at once,  
Were half so sad as one benighted mind,  
Which gropes for happiness, and meets despair.  
How, like a widow in her weeds, the night,  
Amid her glimmering tapers, silent sits!  
How sorrowful, how desolate, she weeps  
Perpetual dews, and saddens nature's scene!  
A scene more sad sin makes the darken'd soul;  
All comfort kills, nor leaves one spark alive."—*Young*.

If the rule of God be good, why has He allowed sin to enter our world? many have asked. But is it not a distinguishing feature of man's nature that he may do what God does not wish him to do? If God were to rob him of that power He would destroy his nature by doing so, and reduce him to a being of a most inferior type. The evil there is in this world is made to advance the good of man.

3. *It has provision for the pardon and eternal up lift of rebels against it.* Man has rebelled against God. It is a capital offense to rise against the seat of authority. Sin is rebellion against God Himself. But the rebel may find pardon, if he will. This throne has provision in its constitution for the restoration of rebels to the favor of the offended King.

"Salvation! O the joyful sound,"

And not only may rebels be forgiven, but there is provision for the highest elevation of their nature.

This provision is unique. No king ever thought of such clemency for offenders.

4. *It cares for the individual.* It is not only interested in its vast empire as a whole; but it is interested in individual man. Blessed thought! The King of the universe is interested in me! Let Him have His way with me!

"Oh! I know that the hand that is guiding me  
Through the shadow to the light;  
And I know that all betiding me  
Is meted out aright.  
I know that the thorny path I tread  
Is ruled with a golden line;  
And I know that the darker life's tangled thread,  
The brighter the rich design."—*Anon.*

IV. ITS OCCUPANT CANNOT BE DETHRONED. What king in these days considers himself perfectly secure upon his throne? May not a plot exist to cast him down? May not a revolution break out that shall result in the abolition of his rule? But the Occupant of this throne has no such fears. In perfect tranquility does He rule, no more perturbed by thought of plot against Him than is the sea of glass before His throne agitated by the winds of earth.

1. *Then the universe shall always have the grandest government.* The Lord shall always rule.

2. *Then the trend of all things shall ever be in the direction of righteousness.*

3. *Then shall He ever be King whose right it is to rule.* The Creator and Preserver of all things shall ever exercise dominion over them. He who gave His Son to save men shall ever be their King. Let the atheist declare this throne vacant, and deny His existence who is seated thereon. Let the materialist set up



law as the sovereign lord of all; yet despite the logic and the imaginations of the minds and hearts of men, God reigns, and shall forever reign. Lastly:

V. ITS DOINGS ARE OFTEN MYSTERIOUS. With such power to carry out His purposes as this King has, have we not often wondered at the slow advance of the gospel of Christ? Has not the success of error astounded us? Are not bad men often found most gifted, while good men who would use their powers for truth and right living, are often dull? The Christian is often a sufferer, while the ungodly are hale and strong. The follower of Christ is often in want, while the enemy of Jesus has abundance. Philosophers may try to explain these facts, and do away with the mystery that is about them; but their explanations do not satisfy. Not until the King Himself explains when we shall stand upon the sea of glass shall the darkness about some parts of the administration of His throne be cleared away.

Then since sinners are rebels against this throne, what do they expect to gain by their rebellion? O foolish men, surrender to its King! But, O follower of Christ, look up! The occupant of this throne is thy Father. Speak to Him; He'll hear thee.

O, thou great arbiter of life and death!  
Nature's immortal, immaterial sun!  
Whose all-prolific beam late call'd me forth  
From darkness, teeming darkness, where I lay  
The worm's inferior, and, in rank, beneath  
The dust I tread on, high to bear my brow,  
To drink the spirit of the golden day,  
And triumph in existence; and could'st know  
No motive, but my bliss; with Abraham's joy,  
Thy call I follow to the land unknown;  
I trust in thee, and know in whom I trust;  
Or life or death is equal; neither weighs;  
All weight in this—O let me live to thee!—*Young.*



THE NEW SONG AND ITS SINGERS

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and has redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.”—  
Rev. v. 6-10.

## THE NEW SONG AND ITS SINGERS.

It is supposed by some that the aurora which makes the northern sky so beautiful at certain seasons, and which breaks the deariness of the Laplander's long night, is some of the light of the first day still lingering about our earth. Be this as it may, this seems evident, that the power of song still possessed by man, is one of the characteristic glories still remaining of that pristine age, when God walked and talked with man. The beauteous scenery delights with its charms, the work of the painter evokes expressions of pleasure and of praise; but song, beyond all art's achievements, or nature's most enchanting scenery, thrills and enraptures the soul. Music is the fire that glows in celestial bosoms, and songs are but the outgoings of its ardent flames. As it glows in the bosoms of men, or brings them beneath its melting influence, it is to them as a refiner's fire, whose purifying work gives delight to the spirit. Many a Luther it has inspired in his melancholy, and many a broken heart it has bound as an evangel from heaven. Who can describe the bliss of song to earth? It has brought tears to eyes unaccustomed to weep for sin, and calm to many a tempest-tossed spirit.

But if the singing of earth is so blissful, what must be that of heaven! We have listened to the voice whose tones seemed the sweetest that earth could produce; but as the soft note of the lute differs from

the coarse strain of the rustic's pipe, so must the notes of heaven differ from the sounds of merely earthly voices. How glorious must have been the strains of the song sung on the occasion of which our text speaks! But while we can form no conception of the sweetness, the loftiness, of those strains, there are facts connected with the song sung on that occasion that are worthy of our careful thought. We shall proceed to consider some of those facts.

I. In doing so we shall first THINK ON HIM BEFORE WHOM AND TO WHOSE PRAISE THE SONG WAS SUNG. This person was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

John who heard the song, was at the time he heard it a prisoner in Patmos because of his adherence to Jesus. The spirit of antagonism that exiled him was very prevalent. But while royal authority was against Christ, and the hearts of many were full of the bitterest hate towards Him, in the heaven of glory where the truly great and kingly of the ages were gathered who had gone from earth, he was being adored in strains, whose sublimity baffle the description of human tongues, or pens.

The position and appearance of Christ in heaven were enough to evoke the loftiest song.

I. *He appeared in the centre of government.* "In the midst of the throne." In His boyhood days we read of Christ being found in the midst of the doctors, as if already He were the centre of religious thinkers. In His manhood, when put to death by men, we see Him crucified in the midst of thieves, while His wounded outstretched hands seem to proclaim salvation to sinners everywhere. But the scenes of earth

are passed, the conflict of the Cross is ended, and now far above all principalities and powers He has risen, and taken His place in the midst of the throne of God. At the time John saw Him, a king was raving against Him on earth, and showing most destructive hate; but He against Whom he thus raged was occupying the most conspicuous place in the government of the universe. No being in all the universe but God was fit for the position He had. Then He had all the forces of the Divine government at His back.

2. *He appeared in His earthly form.* It was not in the grandeur of the Godhead in which the angels beheld Him when from the threshold of His palace of splendors He kindled with His word the orbs of space, and sent in rhythmic unison the untold spheres about their centre suns. It was as John saw Him on the banks of the Jordan. Don't you remember him cry in the hearing of Andrew, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world?"—it was in His mediatorial aspect He appeared when heaven was filled with the music of the song we speak of.

When He left earth He did not leave behind Him that nature in which He had suffered so much. He did not account it too mean any longer to be connected with Him. No: He took it with Him up through the gates of day; it was with it He made His entry into heaven, and in it He occupies the throne of God.

Talk about Christianity degrading man. Nothing has ever appeared that so elevates it. It makes man fit for the loftiest stations. Our nature through Christ has been elevated to the throne of the universe.

Talk about what science can do, and learning, and polished society. Would He not capture the world if men would stop and think on what Christ has done for human nature?

3. *He appeared possessed of wonderful potencies.* "He had seven horns." The horn is emblematic of power. When Jesus was among men there was nothing in His personal appearance indicative of extraordinary ability. Yet He possessed it. Moreover, He was ever conscious of its possession. In the presence of no task requiring superhuman power did He ever falter. Though appearing only as a man, He did the deeds of God. He appeared in heaven as a Lamb, an object of feebleness; but though utterly incongruous as it seemed, as a Lamb He possessed "seven horns," symbolic of perfect strength. As on earth He was perfectly conscious of His ability to do whatsoever He undertook, so in heaven He is conscious of the possession of perfect ability to achieve all He has undertaken for men. The kings of earth may oppose, and the might of hell be brought to bear against Him; but all power in heaven and earth is His, and He shall yet overthrow all His enemies, and rule the world in righteousness.

But He appeared as not only possessed of all power; but of perfect wisdom. "He had seven eyes." When Christ was on earth people marveled at His wisdom. He made known to men truths the ages had not known. As He appears in heaven He manifests His all-seeing power. He has perfect knowledge of all the past; of all the present; of all the future. There can be no outwitting Him in the campaign of man's



emancipation from the dominion of hell; there can come no surprises to Him; there can arise no problems that may not find easy solution.

This perfect wisdom is so intimately connected with the Divine Spirit as that the latter is said to be the former.

The Spirit of God is as essential to the salvation of earth as is the Son. The truth of Christ has this essential characteristic, that it is attended by the manifestation of His power. This cannot be said of scientific truth. He is peculiarly in the truth of Christ. His presence is essential to the operation and consummation of the plans of Christ. It is the Spirit of God in the hearts of all men that makes them capable of appreciating and accepting Jesus. How vast, then, is the ability of Christ! He has perfect power, He has perfect wisdom—wisdom, through the truth and plans of which the Divine Spirit operates to the ends of the earth, and shall to the close of the ages.

4. *He appeared in His sacrificial aspect.* "A lamb as it had been slain." The redemption of man brought about great changes in heaven. Whatever was the aspect which the Son of God wore as He appeared to angels before His advent in earth, His appearance in heaven as the Lamb of God must have been profoundly impressive. Perhaps from the day of their creation angels had been wont to gaze upon ineffable manifestations of the glory and grandeur of God; but since the work of redemption was undertaken, upon heaven and earth is it impressed that the greatest manifestation of the Divine glory is not in making worlds, but in His sacrifice for the salvation of man. As

Christ appeared while this song went on He wore all the tokens of anguish; upon Him were the marks of the Cross. All heaven could see that He gloried more in the exhibition of His heart than the might of His almighty arm.

Thus did Christ appear as the adoring ones of heaven surrounded Him, and poured forth the music of their souls in the song they sang.

II. Let us now look at THE IMMEDIATE INSPIRATION OF THIS SONG. It was inspired by the sight of the Lamb taking the book out of the hand of Him who sat in the midst of the throne. The contents of this book must have been of profound importance, or else its passage from the hand of God to the Lamb, who was alone able to open it, would not have produced such jubilancy. Consider three points in this connection—

1. *Some things about this book.* It was a scroll, full of writing, sealed with seven seals. Into its contents no finite eye had ever looked. Vast are the intellects of angels, and paths of nature that are mysterious to the keenest thinker may be plain paths to them; but here was a volume into which they had never peered. Nor was it power of intellect that was needed to scan its sentences, worth was needed to open its folds, which worth no one possessed in all the heavens but the Lamb.

2. *The meaning of this book.* It is a symbol of truths concerning the government of God. When John passed through the open door into heaven in his vision, the first object that arrested his attention was a throne in the midst of which One sat of marvelous

appearance. Facts concerning the government of that throne are set forth in this book. It is evident that its government is not *extemporized according to occasion, but a divinely thought out plan.*

With infinitely greater wisdom are the mighty movements of the universe marked in this book, than are the movements of express trains on the time tables of railways. The rise and fall of the empires of antiquity, are in this book; and here also are the rise and fall of nations and empires whose history is being written, or that are yet to exist. It seems as if man is at the helm of affairs, guiding them to the haven of his desire. It is only seeming. God is at the helm of affairs; and is so ordering their sailing that the port of His purpose shall be reached. The doings of individuals and of nations are overruled to carry out the plan of heaven recorded in this book.

Now it was the sight of the Lamb taking this book from the hand of Him Who sat on the throne that inspired the jubilancy our text describes. The contents of that book would now be revealed. He who had been found worthy to open it had ever been the Great Revealer of the Divine mind; and as that mind was expressed in this book, so would it be made known in the development of the Author's plan to accomplish His purpose towards men.

That Jesus has in His hands universal government should make the earth glad, for then *the purpose of redemption controls all His plans.* The direction towards which all the movements of the Divine empire tend is the salvation of the human race; for in this salvation Jesus is absorbed.

III. LET US NOW LOOK AT THE CONTENTS OF THIS SONG AND ITS CHARACTER. Having considered what gave rise to the singing, it is most interesting to inquire what was the burden of the song that was sung. Its contents were of the sublimest character. They have furnished themes for the grandest, the most divine songs of the ages. They sang about the worthiness of the Lamb to open the book. This worthiness was manifested in His deeds for man.

1. *He had redeemed man, every man.* Law had claims on him. He must suffer for his sins. Law has no word of compassion. But Jesus came and made salvation possible. He has redeemed us in the entirety of our nature—soul and body. The grave cannot hold us.

2. *He has redeemed us by His death.* No logic can, in harmony with the teachings of the Bible, separate man's redemption from the sacrifice of Christ. We are redeemed because He died. "We have redemption through His blood." This is the truth that honors God, and that the world must know in order to its salvation.

3. *He has elevated to highest distinction.* Jesus puts royalty into men. The most abject of men may be elevated to the truest kingly rank. He makes true priests of men. Their office is performed unto God, and their constant sacrifices are themselves. Christ-made kings and priests cannot be discovered by their secular positions, or their garments. Some of them move in very lowly spheres, and wear very mean apparel. Their character discovers them. They reign

as kings and serve as priests in business circles, in social and domestic life.

This song is characterized as a new song. Such it was, for its contents were new. The Lamb was slain in the purpose of God from the foundation of the world; but it had only recently been really slain. Beside every step in the development of the divine plan will afford new matter for song—for a new song, to the end of time.

What are the contents of the songs of the singers of the ages compared, for importance to earth, to the contents of this sang? Sung centuries ago in heaven, they are of as much importance to earth now as they were then.

IV. Lastly, consider THE SINGERS OF THE NEW SONG.

This song was sung by the four beasts, or living creatures, and the four-and-twenty elders. These represent the redeemed; for such they declare themselves to be. Only the redeemed could sing this new song.

But as the strains of these singers were heard by the throngs of heaven, all became inspired with the glory of the theme. The singers of the new song sang it in the most *reverent attitude*, and with the most *adoring spirit*.

There is coming the time of the Oratorio of the Universe, in which all in heaven and earth shall join, while nature shall assist in the strains, to sing, "Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

In conclusion : 1. *The doctrine of the Trinity is in the*

*theology of heaven. 2. That self-sacrifice for man is the most attractive characteristic of God. 3. That only by Jesus Christ can we know the mysteries of God's purposes and plans. 4. That as the earth appreciates that He who was slain for man's redemption is at the helm of its affairs, so shall it be more and more filled with new songs. 5. Let us all join in this song to-day; we all have reason to sing it.*

THE OPENING OF THE SEALS.

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals and I heard as it were the noise of thunder one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer, and when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse *that was* red: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword,” etc.—Rev. vi. 1-17.



## THE OPENING OF THE SEALS.

The great idea of the Apocalypse is the second coming of Christ. That this is the fact is the opinion of its most eminent interpreters. He is coming; and some time earth shall see Him again. But when He shall appear it will not be as the lowly Nazarene, attended by a few poor fishermen. He shall appear in the glory of a conqueror, whose kingdom shall extend "from sea, to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth." When He undertook the deliverance of earth from sin He did not do so blindly. He was fully aware of the antagonists He would meet, and the dark and dismal scenes through which He would have to go to victory. Nor did he impress upon His church that the way to the dominance of earth was an easy one, full of sunshine and song; but, on the contrary one in which would be found the most darksome scenes. These facts, we think, are fully sustained by the opening of the seals; which we shall now proceed to consider. In doing so we shall take the first seal as setting forth *Christ on His march of conquest*, and the remaining five seals of this chapter as *portraying events in the history of that march*.

I. CHRIST ON HIS MARCH FOR THE CONQUEST OF THE WORLD. When the first seal was opened, one of the living creatures was heard in thunder tones saying: "Come and see." The words, "and see" are not in the Revised Version. Some expositors under-

stand the invitation as addressed to Christ. Alfred says that "Come" is addressed by creation to the Lord Jesus. But others understand the Seer as addressed. This understanding seems most plausible. The persecuted Apostle is called on to behold His triumphing Lord. Though His followers should be called to endure trouble, hardships, and deaths, his Lord would yet ride triumphantly over all His foes. What consolation that scene would give the Apostle! Look at how Christ appeared on the opening of this seal.

1. *He was seated on a white horse.* May we not understand by this "white horse" the ministry of the Gospel? It is supposed to consist of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—of those who have holy characters. As the horse in the vision held up its rider before all observers, so gospel ministers are to hold up Christ before all men. He is the only object that is to appear prominent in the discharge of their duty. He is thus to come to unholy men through a living, holy agency.

2. *He had a bow.* Elliott and Cumming consider the bow as emblematic of imperial power under Nerva, but may it not be also emblematic of the marvelous power of Christ's Gospel in the hearts of men? The horse does not gain the warrior his victory; it only carries him thither. It is the strength of his arm put into his bow that wins his conquest. The Gospel ministry does not gain Christ's victories for Him. It has not in itself the power. It is Divine power in the truth uttered that makes it mighty to overcome the sinful heart. It is the Divine arm that puts strength into the

arrow, and makes it penetrate the heart of the King's enemies. The Gospel ministry has its place. It fulfils a glorious part. But the conquest of the human heart is by Christ Jesus alone through His Holy Spirit.

3. *A crown was given Him.* He had already won empire. He had overcome death and hell; but beside these victories, He had achieved the conquest of many hearts. Large numbers had surrendered to His sceptre and had given Him the dominion of their lives. Yes, while Christ was being treated with the greatest contempt by great ones on earth, and His followers were suffering from Rome's sovereign the greatest ignominy, before the eye of the Exile of Patmos, Christ was being crowned as conqueror.

4. *And He came forth conquering, and that He may conquer.* The conquests He had won were but preliminary to others yet to be achieved. The conquests of Christ are always preparatory to others. His march of conquest is not to cease until every foe is overcome, and His Kingdom is world wide. It is only of Christ that it can be said, He is to continue His march of victory until universal empire is attained. This march may be slow; yet shall we see Him with the crown of universal sovereignty on His head. Glorious empire, His! And glorious conqueror, He! His victory brings peace and heaven to the soul. The days of heaven will be earth's days when He shall have universal sway.

II. EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF CHRIST'S CONQUERING MARCH. The remaining seals of the chapter may be taken, as unfolding events, which were to mark the

history of His triumphant march. Consider these events.

1. *War*. "And there went out another horse that was red," etc. There is a very general opinion that the red horse means war. And the opinion is sustained by the rider on this horse having given him a great sword.

Wars, of different characters: wars between nations; wars between people of the same nation; such as followed the ascension of Commodus to the throne of Rome; wars of persecution; such as had already raged against the followers of Christ, have occurred; but He who opened this seal overrules the prancings of this destructive beast to the accomplishment of His own purposes. Wars between nations have been used to open up the way for His advance; wars between the same people have been used as judgments, as seemed to be the case with Rome after the death of the Antonines. Christ has so overruled the wrath of men that the more they have persecuted His followers the more grandly His cause has moved on. The prancing of the red horse, and the destructive sword of his rider have not hindered the march of Jesus as conqueror; but have the rather been so controlled by Him as to advance His cause. Another event is—

2. *Famine*. The divine hand opens the third seal, and a voice calls to John to "come and see." "And he beheld, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." Black is the color of distress and famine. Jeremiah said, "Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine." The opening of this seal indicated a coming

time of great scarcity, when not by measure, but by weight, would corn be sold; when a man's earnings would give him but a meagre sustenance, while they would make no provision for his family. In times of famine, life's necessities advance to many times their normal price, while wages remain as low, or fall lower, than they had been. Hence great distress must attend famine.

It is quite natural to find the black horse of dire need, where the red horse of war has recently been. Rome became the scene of fearful civil strife, which was one of the causes of its decline; it was also the scene of famine in the days of Commodus. But the "black horse" did not pass from the scene, as the "red" did not, when the Roman empire was no longer the arena of its presence. Often since the dissolution of that mighty establishment has it been seen. Famine, with its attendant, distress, has not been an infrequent visitor of nations, and the followers of Christ have often been tried by its dreadful ordeal. And so will it yet visit nations; but it is under the control of Christ. The rider of this black horse must order his course as the Lamb pleases, and be subject to His commands. He has used famine to punish people; but He uses famine to call forth men's philanthropy, and to lead the spirit of brotherliness to visit the distressed, not only with food, but often with His Gospel of comfort. It should also be noted that many of Christ's followers live on very stinted fare.

But in this connection notice the command given by the voice in the midst of the four living creatures: "See thou hurt not the oil and the wine." These words

set a limit to the operations of the rider on the black horse. But are we to understand by them the literal wine and oil? Then must we understand that the rider on the black horse was not to hurt the luxuries of the rich; for oil and wine were theirs, not the poor man's. On them he could not subsist, even if they were within his reach. There must be another meaning given those commodities. Wine and oil in Scripture represent spiritual blessings. Truth and joy are represented by them. The time of dire need would be a time when Christ's followers would specially need His presence. It would be a time when the wine of truth would be needed to refresh the soul, and the oil of gladness to save from despondent gloom. May not this command to the rider on the dark horse mean that, famine should not be able to hurt the influences of truth in the minds of Christ's followers, or spoil the joy they have in the Holy Ghost?

Blessed truth! Even famine cannot hurt the luxuries of the soul. Jesus Christ takes care of His own amid life's most painful circumstances. Another event is

3. *Death*. Harkening to the voice of the fourth living creature John looked, "And behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the field." Here we have death personified, and with him the open-mouthed grave, ready to swallow all the victims of his agents. The fourth seal is the most terrible. The rider of this ghastly horse has

all the powers of destruction at his command—war, famine, pestilence, and the beasts of the field. How fearful through the ages has been the havoc he has wrought!

Whatever may be the meaning of “the fourth part of the earth,” which, power was given Death to destroy, this is evident from history that, there occurred fearful devastations of human life in different parts of the Roman world, from which Christians were not exempt; but, in which they were prominent. Whole cities were annihilated. Maximinus and Gallienus were horrid monsters; they butchered people by the thousands. Plague, famine, and wild beasts wrought havoc in the cities of the Empire, fulfilling the prophecy of this fourth seal. Yet though Christians were sorely persecuted, though whole towns were destroyed, or compelled to abandon their faith, the cause of Christ advanced.

And so shall He go on conquering though Death and Hell work their havoc even among His followers, and thus by their terrors seek to obstruct His path. Another event is

4. *Martyrdom.* The fifth seal opens under changed circumstances. No voice from the throne calls the Seer to “come and see;” voices are heard; but they are those of the martyred, crying unto God for vengeance. Fearful were the numbers of Christians slain in the early ages for their fidelity to Jesus their Lord. In the ten years of the reign of Dioclesian so enormous were the numbers that, the emperor flattered himself that he had extirpated Christianity. As commemor-

ative of that assumption he had a memorial tower erected.

From the report John gives us of the opening of this seal there are great truths impressed upon our minds concerning the martyrs in the cause of Jesus.

1. *They were self sacrificed.* He saw them at the foot of the altar—perhaps the brazen altar is intended. They were here because they chose to die rather than deny the Word of God, or refrain from bearing testimony to Christ. 2. *They retained their memory and were concerned as to God's treatment of their foes.* Their foes were His foes; and they longed for the vindication and triumph of His cause. 3. *They were gloriously rewarded in heaven.* White robes were given them, rest, and hope of the society of their brethren, who were yet to pass through tribulations similar to their own. Persecution did not hurt them. Grandeur their state in heaven, whither the tortures of their foes sent them, than it could have been on earth. What a comfort to John must these facts have been! What a comfort to the Church to whom he made them known!

5. *Terrible physical phenomena* appear to attend the opening of the sixth seal. John is no longer amid temple scenes, but out in nature where he beholds marvelous events as this seal is opened. What are we to understand by what he saw? Here, as with other parts of this book the Lamb is opening, we meet with different interpretations. Some consider the fearful scenes described as setting forth the destruction of the Roman Empire; others take the prodigies here described as finding their realization in the overthrow of



pagan Rome, and the establishment of Christianity under Constantine. There are others who understand it as referring to the events preceding the Judgment day.

But may not this seal embrace in its meaning all these interpretations of it? The overthrow of the Roman Empire, its attendant and consequent events, were matters in which the Church of Christ was greatly concerned; the fall of great ones like stars from heaven, the destroying of the glory of centuries was like the sun darkening, and the moon becoming as blood; while the profound conviction that the awful catastrophe was because of hostility to Jesus Christ, might well be set forth by the dread the text describes men had of meeting the enraged Lamb. The scenes in the overthrow of the Roman Empire surely correspond to the prodigies described in this seal.

But so might it be shown that the overthrow of pagan Rome, in the marvelous events that transpired, answers in striking detail to the imagery of the passage. And it would require no ingenuity to show that in it also the events that are prophesied to precede the Judgment day, are vividly set forth.

However, whatever meaning be attached to this part of our text, there are facts that are indubitable.

1. *That physical phenomena may be connected with spiritual and political events.* In the year 365, the greatest part of the Roman world was shaken by a violent and destructive earthquake. From that time, it is said, its downfall dates.

2. *That there is no enemy so exalted, or mighty, that Christ cannot overthrow.* He can order the sun to put on the sackcloth of hair, instead of his wonted

apparel of splendor, and by a look cause stars to fall from their altitudes of glory. No Maxentius, or Maximin, or Galerius, can stand before Him to oppose Him, when once He chooses to destroy.

3. *That the day of the Lamb's wrath will be one of dreadful affright to sinners.* The tables will be turned with His enemies. Instead of venting their anger against Him, they shall suffer His wrath. Under such circumstances there shall be no help for them. They may call on nature for relief; but nature has no ears to hear them. Sweet and gentle is Christ towards men. This is His general bearing. But when His wrath is kindled at their rebellion, how appalling He becomes to men! Galerius, who butchered of his subjects 3000 to 4000 daily, many of whom were Christians, was eaten up with worms; but so conscience stricken was he before his death, that he begged the Christians to pray for him. Maximinus, who destroyed whole towns over a large area of Germany, died a fearful death, his eyes dropping out of their sockets. Let not men think that the Christian dispensation is only lamb-like. It is this; but it has also sterner traits. Can you conceive anything more terrible than the Lamb in wrath?

In conclusion: In these seals we have, by varied imagery, set before us the events that were to occur, and some of which are, perhaps, yet to occur in the history of Christ's progress as Conqueror of the world. Surely it can be said that history has much to say about wars that affected the cause of Christ; about indigence, from which not only pagans, but Christians suffered; about death by the sword; about martyrdoms; and mighty revolutions in nations.

The future was before the eye of the Rider on the "white horse." He saw His foes, and had ready His forces. He can bid the untutored hordes fight for Him.

The scroll of our life is in His hand. We do not ask Him to unfold it to us. Better that we should not know it. We are content that He knows our present and future. But our prayer is: Lamb of God order our steps that we grieve Thee not!



JUDGMENT RESTRAINED.

"After these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."—Rev. vii. 1-3.

## JUDGMENT RESTRAINED.

When Paul was sailing towards Rome a fearful storm came down upon the sea. For days the tempest raged, and neither sun nor stars appeared. So greatly was the ship tossed by wind and wave that shipwreck seemed inevitable. But in the darkest and most dreadful hour an angel of God stood by Paul, and assured him of the safety of all on board. John was as an angel to the early Church. Speaking to it words of comfort and assurance for the times of trial. Fierce storms were to burst upon nations, that would work their destruction; but in the midst of the attendant tribulations he told them, with the authority of Heaven, that Christ would take care of His own. How solicitous is Jesus ever for the peace of mind and composure of heart of His followers! He cannot continue to the end His unfolding of the events yet to transpire, without pausing to comfort, with the assurance, that amid the scenes that earth should witness, terrible though they should be, the interests of His people would have His supremest regard. He would teach that so great is His interest in His people, that the march of destruction must halt till their welfare is secured. This truth will further appear as we dwell upon the passage before us. In it we have

I. JUDGMENT PORTENDING. Winds are used in the Scriptures as symbolic of judgment. As such they suggest some general truths about it.—

1. *Its naturalness.* Winds may be traced to natural causes; they never come but in accordance with natural law. So may judgments be traced to conditions, whose existence may lead us to expect them. The desolations of war may be judgments of the Almighty; but they are war's common results. Malaria may poison the blood of a community; but it is the natural result of the fetid marsh near by.

2. *Its destructiveness.* Fearful have been the ravages of the wind. Whether as storm, or earthquake, or war, fearful have often been the desolations that have attended Divine judgments.

3. *Its unpreventableness.* Who can stop the march of the tempest? Who can call a halt to the judgments of God?

The four winds indicate the *universality* of judgment. Whether or not the winds in these verses refer to God's judgment of Jerusalem or the fall of the Roman Empire, we will not pause to discuss. The destruction of the Jewish nation for its sins was not far distant when these verses were penned; and events in the history of the fall of Rome fit into their teachings with striking exactness. Here we see—

II. JUDGMENT IN THE HANDS OF ANGELS. Had we not the Scriptures to tell us of the existence of loftier created intelligences than men, perhaps our reason would lead us to conclude that there might be such beings. There are creatures below us; may there not be creatures above us? The beings above us may transcend us in nature, and intelligence, as we surpass the beings that are beneath us. However this may be, an-



gels are God's servants. They dwell amid His glory, and hasten to do His bidding.

1. *They come to earth to do kindly offices for man.* They take care of little children. "Their angels do always," etc. It is not beneath them to cook for a weary, disheartened prophet.

2. *They come on missions of judgment.* It was an angel caused Egypt the saddest night of her history. They hold the winds, which, when let loose by them, cause widespread desolation.

It is taught by some that nature is endowed with laws, as man is with intelligence, and that these laws govern her as intelligence controls him. Thus would the operations of nature be explained. But would it not be equally philosophical to consider nature as under the direction of God's great servants, to manage its operations according to the orderings of His will. This is a more Scriptural view. According to this, spirit, and not mere law, is the mighty moving, controlling, agent of the universe. Here we have—

III. JUDGMENT RESTRAINED. The winds were ready to blow from the four corners of the earth; but the angels were commanded to restrain them, so that they "hurt not the earth," etc. Who was this angel that so commanded?

1. *He came from the sunrise.* From this direction the greatest evils have come. Some of the worst plagues. But from this quarter have come earth's greatest blessings. Blessings without which we could not do, no more than we could do without the sun.

2. *He was high in the esteem of God;* for he car-

ried the seal of the living God. He must have been most distinguished in angel society.

3. *He had great authority.* Not only did his bearing the seal of God, but his voice, show this. For to it the four angels hearkened. Who again, the question comes, was this angel?

There is but One Being concerning whom all that is said about this angel may be affirmed, that Being is Jesus Christ.

How like Him to desire suspension of judgment! He will have the unfruitful tree spared another year.

The restraint of judgment by God, shows His mercy, as its speedy execution does not.

The existence of man on the earth is because of restrained judgment. Had God not ordered the winds held back, where would we be?

This may be a time of restraint of judgment to us individually, and to our nation. Here we have—

IV. JUDGMENT RESTRAINED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE GOOD. The destruction of Sodom was delayed until Lot got out. Had there been ten righteous found therein, for their sakes judgment would have been averted. The prayers of Moses for Israel restrained the divine wrath from destroying that people. The tares are not plucked up and burned, when at first they appear, but are allowed to grow because of the wheat among which they are found. They will be gathered some day; but because of the wheat, not now.

There is something of more importance to God than judgment. The sealing of His people is of more importance; and till that is done, the angels must keep the winds in their hands.

This sealing, by the blessed experience, and the deeper conviction of God's love which it implies, prepared those for whom these words were written for the storms that were threatening. The seal of God upon our forehead is Heaven's evidence that we are His, and His especial care. And possessed of this evidence we can boldly face any time of tempest.

In conclusion: 1. *God does make a distinction between people.* 2. *The good of His people must have the precedence.* Judgment must halt, and so must moon and stars, if necessary, until their interests are conserved. 3. *Nations and individuals owe much to God's servants.* They have respite from judgment because of them. 4. *He is eternally secure who is on the side of God.* Nothing now, or hereafter, can hurt him.



MAN IN HEAVEN.

"And one of the Elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Rev. vii. 13-17.

## MAN IN HEAVEN.

Great choirs have been formed to sing on notable occasions; but what the greatest of the grandest occasion, compared with the numbers of the singers John saw? And what the most magnificent strains of earth's grandest oratorios, compared with the music of the multitudes John heard? Often have been witnessed scenes of human pomp and splendor; but never did the eye of man rest on such scenes of glory as John beheld in vision from his exile home. This chapter contains a description of one of the most thrilling of these. Intimately associated with this scene is the one of our text. It tells us great facts, concerning the multitudes which stand about the throne of God and the Lamb, truths that have inspired poets to sing their sweetest numbers, and ministers to preach with heart comforting and mind capturing eloquence. What text in all the Apocalypse has been more dwelt upon than this one? Yet, it never loses its attractiveness for our thought, or charm for our heart. Let us look into its teachings once more. As we do so we learn—

I. THAT THERE IS A HIGHER PLACE THAN EARTH CALLED HEAVEN FOR THE RACE OF MAN. The Scriptures speak of another place than earth which is inhabited by intelligencies, and where God manifests Himself, as He does nowhere else. It is represented as a place of great glory. Human imagination cannot conceive of scenes as transcendently grand as are there.

Where it is has long been a matter of conjecture. It may be the centre of the universe.

But the fact about this world that fills us with the grandest delight is this: it is intended to be the future dwelling place of earth's human population. Amid the glories of this land the race of man is intended eternally to dwell. This being so it follows—

1. *That man's being does not cease with his earthly life.* The teaching of the Scriptures as to the existence of man after death is in perfect accord with his intuition of another life.

That the extinguishment of the life of the body is not the destruction of the being of man, was the great source of comfort and strength to the persecuted in the early days of the church. Had they thought that the tyrants of the times could put an end to their existence, Christians would not have endured persecution for their faith as they did.

It is the belief in another state of being than this, that comforts amid the trials of this life. Were it not for it, the sweetest utterances of the muse, and the most enrapturing notes of the singer, would be absent from the soul of man. It follows—

2. *That man's nature is adapted to a higher place than earth.* Jesus Christ has revealed the marvelous nature of man. It is possible through it to reveal God. It is possible in it to enjoy God. His ability to appreciate the beautiful, to advance in knowledge and in the likeness of God, show the sublimity of his nature, and its adaptability to higher scenes than those of earth. It follows—

3. *That man's present life is one of preparation for*



*this higher place of abode.* While possessed of a nature high in the scale of being, man is at the same time through his conduct, degenerate, depraved. There is required lofty character to enjoy the high place God means man to occupy in the universe. This life is the time to prepare for that higher place. It follows—

4. *That man should think about his future place of abode.* Well it might be expected, that he, who is preparing for that higher land where he expects to live forever, would think much about it. How sweet the thoughts of it! How sweet the thought that, there the good who have gone on, are!—Our loved ones are there! There we shall see Him who has made heaven possible to us.

“Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark?  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;  
For though from out our bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crost the bar.”

We learn—

II. THAT MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN RACE ARE ALREADY THERE IN GREAT NUMBERS. “Are there few that be saved?” asked one of the disciples of the Lord. The question has come to other minds in view of the character required to enter the land above. But how delightful to listen to the Seer of Patmos, who saw into that land, as he declare that, the numbers of the human race therein cannot be numbered?

There was a time when there was but one of Adam’s

children in heaven. The song of the Lamb was first a solo. But such vast numbers had gone thither till John's time that they could not be numbered. And since his day emigration to that better land has been most active. And if eighteen centuries ago the human population of heaven could not be told, how vast must it be this hour! What vast numbers of children are there! People are there from every land, and nation. There is no Chinese exclusion act there. This fact. 1. *Controverts the reasoning of some people.* They argue from *their* conceptions of the divine requirements to enter heaven that, there are very few of earth's people there. Hell is to them a very populous place. 2. *It harmonizes with our conception of the Divine Fatherhood.* God is Judge as well as Father, and will punish the wicked; but, that heaven has only a few of the human kind while hell has vast numbers, is utterly incongruous to all our ideas of a loving God. 3. *It fills us with gratitude.* Thank God that there are vast numbers of our race in heaven! Satan sought the desolation of man; but through Divine mercy heaven is being filled with his kind. We learn—

III. THAT ALL WHO GO TO HEAVEN FROM EARTH RETAIN THERE THEIR PERSONAL IDENTITY. The Christian is not now in a sort of chrysalis state, out of which he will emerge at death, and spreading his wings soar, a different kind of being from what he had been, to the climes of eternal day. Yes, he is now, as to his personality, what he shall be. The multitudes John saw were not different beings from what they had been. They were the very beings who had

come up out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, etc.

We shall be ourselves in that higher land. Marvelously enlarged may our faculties be, and dormant powers of our spirit may be awakened; but our identity shall not be impaired. Should it be disclosed to us that we shall be different beings in that land from what we are here, we should instantly lose interest in it.

That we shall be ourselves in that land that awaits the good, is our reason for believing we shall know each other there. We learn—

IV. THAT THOSE ALREADY IN HEAVEN OCCUPY LOFTY POSITIONS. They are before the throne of God. They are not there to have their cases adjudicated. *They are there as servants. Their service is constant—* day and night. Their powers are exercised in the grandest work. The right use of our powers on earth tends to fit them for their higher use. That we are engaged in earth's most humble toil no more unfits us to serve before the throne of heaven, than would being a king fit us. That God surprises us with the sudden removal of some of His earthly servants, may perhaps be explained by His need of them in the service of His throne in heaven. We learn—

V. THAT MEN IN HEAVEN ENJOY PERFECT HAPPINESS. There is much happiness enjoyed on earth; but it is not perfect. There is a tear near the eye of the most joyous. Earth's bliss has sighs in it. But the bliss of heaven is perfect.

I. *There is no physical need felt there.* The body that hungered and had thirst, is not yet awaked from its death sleep; and when it shall be, it will not need

earth's bread nor water. No hunger nor thirst there!

2. *There is no harm from external conditions there.* "The sun shall not smite them," etc. There is nothing in their external circumstances to detract from their bliss. No Sirocco blows there with its scorching heat. All about them and above them minister to their bliss.

3. *There are no tears there.* Sweet, blessed truth! They are needed here; but not there. No more shall the painful scenes of earth disturb the soul. God shall wipe away all tears. When we wipe them from off our cheek they come again; but when God shall wipe them away, they will never return.

4. *There is the presence and companionship of Jesus.* Though unseen by us now, His nearness to our souls fills them with delight. We are happy while we sing about Him, and think of Him; but what will it be to be in His presence, and reside with Him?

5. *There is enjoyed the care of the Great Shepherd.* He shall feed them. O the provisions of heaven for the need of the redeemed! He shall lead them from fountain to fountain of living water. He shall lead them to the very sources of truest bliss. Earth has only foretastes of the happiness of heaven. There, Jesus Who has made them accessible to man, shall lead them to the very fountains of joy, of which they shall drink forever. We learn—

VI. THAT ALL OF THE HUMAN FAMILY WHO ARE IN HEAVEN REACHED THERE IN THE SAME WAY. The way is twofold.

1. *They went thither through great tribulations.* Whatever tribulations are here meant, this is evident,

they had left them behind. This truth must have been comforting to the persecuted to whom it first came. There were men in heaven who had had severe experiences like those they were having. Tribulations are earthly experiences. In heaven they are only remembered. The way to heaven is not under the shade of palm trees amnog which we are borne on flowery beds. It is one, quite often, of sad and distressing experiences. It is thus, whether it starts from a monarch's throne, or a pauper's hovel.

2. *They went thither through the merits of the blood of the Lamb.* "They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore," etc.

(1.) The blood of Jesus Christ is the only means by which men may have the white robe of character.

(2.) The blood of Jesus Christ must be personally used to possess the white robe of character.

(3.) The white robe of character may only be secured on earth; for here only is the blood of Jesus as a cleansing element.

(4.) That the purifying power of the blood of Jesus is not confined to any part of the race. Every nation, and people, and tongue may experience it.

Blessed be God! there are vast numbers of our race already in heaven; and there are great numbers on the way thither. When it is said that the good man is dead, he has only begun to live in the highest and grandest sense.

Is it any wonder the Apostle Paul had a desire to depart and be with Christ? Is it any wonder the

Christian as the day of life begins to wane, looks forward with joy to the land beyond the sunset?

We have seen the Christian waiting and watching for the ship of God to take him from earth's isle to his home on the heavenly mainland; we have seen him as if sitting waiting for the coming of the chariot to convey him to his home in the skies.

"O that home of the soul! in my visions and dreams  
Its bright jasper walls I can see,  
'Till I fancy but dimly the vail intervenes,  
Between that fair city and me."

SILENCE IN HEAVEN.

"And when he had opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."—Rev. viii. I.



## SILENCE IN HEAVEN.

Nature wears an exceedingly impressive aspect when the battalions of the storm have marched up the steep of the sky before the face of the setting sun, and, having taken possession of all the heavens, clash together in frightful conflict, pouring forth their destructive fire. But to some, at least, her aspect is much more sublimely impressive, when tired man, and weary beast have gone to slumber, and the stars have come out, like the assembling of her ministers in the court of the Queen of Night, and the silence of the midnight reigns everywhere.

The gift of speech is one of Heaven's great boons bestowed on man. How invaluable as a vehicle of thought! But its correlative, silence, seems to be specially honored by God. He uses it usually in His procedures.—He ever works in silence; and it is ■ characteristic of nature that she works in the same way.

"Soundless as chariots on the snow  
The saplings of the forest grow  
To trees of mighty girth:  
Each mighty star in silence burns,  
And every day in silence turns  
The axle of the earth."

How profoundly impressive must the silence our text speaks of have been to John. Heaven had been full of stir, there had been lightnings and thunderings; ascriptions of adoration and the singing of new songs.

All heaven had been as one vast orchestra. But, every sound ceased, not a voice was heard from the throne, not a note from any singer, not the rustle of an angel's wing;—for thirty minutes there was silence in heaven! This silence affords opportunity for the use of the imagination. To depict its scene requires the genius of the most gifted son of song. But what is there in it for plain, useful teaching? Must it be passed by as affording no suggestions for soul uplifting discourse? I think not. While it is true that no man has given such an interpretation of this silence as indisputably settles its meaning, yet some remarks may be suggested by it that may be helpful. Let us proceed with these remarks—

I. THAT THIS SILENCE IN HEAVEN SUGGESTS THAT THERE IS THERE DEEP INTEREST IN MAN. There are different interpretations of this silence; but all of them support the fact that heaven is greatly interested in earth. It is very evident that this silence existed in connection with the events that had transpired, or were about to transpire on earth.

And that heaven is greatly interested in earth is one of the most prominent teachings of the Scriptures. The universe infinitely transcends our largest conception of magnitude. What vast armies of worlds occupy the fields of space! Are these inhabited by beings, who, like man, can study their structure, and know their God? We know not; only God can answer such questioning. But if populated, whatever be the nature of their people, this seems evident from the teachings of Revelation, that man above all other beings, has the attention of God and heaven. Perhaps

no other being is so nearly related to God as man is; and this high relationship may make him an object of deepest interest to all intelligences. Observe two facts:

1. *That the argument against God's interest in earth from its smallness, finds no countenance in the Bible.* Perhaps our world is not as large as a pin-point compared to the immensity of the universe, how much smaller than the beings that are therein, yet man is so dear to God that He sacrificed the chiefest Object of His affections to secure his good.

2. *The events that make up the history of nations are far-reaching in their interest.* They engage not only the attention of those who study them on earth; but they profoundly interest heaven as they affect the kingdom of Christ among men.

The interest of heaven in earth is universal. To the senses of the Seer all heaven was silent. Not only are the redeemed from earth still interested therein, but the angels are interested also.—“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” No one section of heaven only, but all its hosts, are interested in the weal of man. I remark—

II. THAT THIS SILENCE IN HEAVEN MAY BE TYPICAL OF SIMILAR STATE OF THINGS IN THE CHURCH ON EARTH. The scenes John beheld in heaven were mostly typical of scenes that were to transpire on earth. His vision was of things to come in the Church, and in connection with it. There are those who consider the silence of our text as typifying the tranquil

time of the Empire and the Church in the days of Constantine. It was a time when Rome's enemies were conquered, and such tranquility prevailed that on some of the medals of Constantine still preserved, is found the inscription, "Blessed tranquillity."

But whatever may be meant by this prophecy of silence in the Church, we may observe that there would be in it. 1. *The silence of adoring wonder.* This was experienced in the early Church in the presence of the marvels God had wrought in the overthrow of His enemies. It is experienced to-day by all who contemplate the history of Divine achievements among men, achievements wrought in the face of tremendous opposition. It is occasioned to-day by the view of the new creations of the Spirit—wretched wrecks of humanity made into new creatures. In the presence of these works, displaying more of the heart of God towards man than all creation beside, the soul finds its highest expression of adoration and wonder in silence.

2. There would be *the silence of awe at judgments threatened the ungodly.* Perhaps the opening of the seventh seal speaks of the events that would attend the destruction of Rome. If so the knowledge of those events was enough to cause in any contemplative mind the profoundest silence.

But whether or not this silence of heaven was typical of the state of the Church and of the world when Rome's fearful end had come, the Church in her thoughtful moments would ever be awed into silence at the thought of the doom that awaits ungodly men. Who could be loquacious who thinks of the fearful

end of the sinner? Who could find language to express the feelings of his soul? Silence only could do so.

3. *There will yet be everywhere the silence that follows victory.* Some have thought the silence of our text typifies the millennial time of the Church, when Christ shall reign over all the earth. And this time is surely coming. I remark—

III. THAT THIS SILENCE IN HEAVEN IS SUGGESTIVE OF THE SOUL'S SUBLIMEST MOOD. Some of the noblest minds have loved silence; for it was infinitely more expressive of their thoughts and feelings, than speech. The music of heaven gave place to the silence our text speaks of, as if a higher and truer expression of heaven's emotions than even the notes of its choirs could be. Thus do we think that the soul is in its grandest mood when, under the influence of a great thought, or in the presence of sublime things, it is silent.

I. *It is in its noblest mood when silent in the presence of God.* How great is God! He alone is great. Before the potentates of earth the mere subject must be silent out of respect for majesty. How becoming then is silence before God. It is not when the soul is in its talkative mood that it rises to the grandest heights of experience of the blessings of the Divine presence. The very sounds of words are intruders that distract attention while there. If there were more the silence of contemplation in our worship, it would be far more elevating. It is too often spoiled in its intended effect by too much speech. If there were more thoughtful, silent, worship of God in His sanc-

tuary, church going would have a higher meaning to the outside world than it has. When a man is silent before God under such a sense of His greatness and glory as that for him to attempt to utter a word would be like dissipating an atmosphere that had in it all the blessedness of heaven, then it is that he is in closest contact with the Eternal. Again—

2. *It is in its noblest mood when in silence it views life's meaning and bearing.* Life is solemn. A proper conception of its meaning is enough to appall. The garrulous, noisy person belies the solemnity of life. It is not a time for amusement, or personal gratification; but a time for work upon self of the most vital character. It is time of which there is not a moment to be lost, there is so much work upon ourselves to be done. Our place in eternity depends upon what we make out of life. No man can rightly ponder the seriousness of living, while in a jocund, talkative mood, or even while singing psalms. He who looks upon himself with thoughtful eye as holding the keys of his own destiny, will be moved to silence at the sight.

3. *It is in its noblest mood when silent under afflictive providences.* The rock impresses us with its sublimity, as silently it stands amid the surging sea—as calm as when the waves are hushed, and the winds have ceased to blow. No time does the soul appear so sublime as when firm in the faith of God calmly it stands while the tempest rages about it.

4. *It is in its noblest mood when in silence it contemplates the personal love of Christ.* Such contempla-

tion so fills the soul with love and gratitude that no language can be found expressive of its emotions.

5. *It is in its noblest mood when silent under the abuse of enemies.* Christ appeared in His noblest aspect when under the mockings of men He reviled not again. I remark—

V. THIS SILENCE SUGGESTS THAT THERE MAY BE PAUSES IN THE PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH ON EARTH. Events in heaven forshadow events in the Church on earth. As there was a pause in the activities of the upper world, there would be a similar event in the Church on earth.

And such have at least appeared to exist; and more than once. There have been times when the advance of God's cause has been rapid. It has seemed as if the utterances of prophets as to the world's surrender to Christ and the universal extension of His kingdom, would soon take place. But this activity has ceased, and a dreadful lull has followed. In this time preaching has seemed to be powerless, and prayers unanswered. It has seemed as if heaven were silent, and all activities for the advance of the world's salvation had been suspended.

Such apparent cessations of heaven's operations among men, are, prehaps, inexplicable; but they are attended by lapsings into formalism, worldliness, scepticism. Many turn away from following Christ.

Have we not known of such apparent silence in our part of the world? Does such not seem to exist now? It is arousing the Church, she has become alarmed at the indifferent, or disdainful attitude of the world toward her.

In conclusion: As I have not attempted to expound the meaning of the passage, so neither have I sought to follow a consecutive order of thought. But whatever be the meaning of this silence, there are two facts that will not be disputed. 1. That, however important may be life's activities, it will not be time lost to pause a little, and in silence meditate on God, our duty, and our destiny. Silence in heaven was not lost time. 2. That when we shall reach heaven, so far as we shall be concerned, there will be silence there again; for, what we shall see, and hear, and feel, will so far transcend all our imaginings, that we shall be dumb with wonder and gratitude.



THE RAINBOW ROUND ABOUT THE  
THRONE.

"And there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight  
like unto an emerald."—Rev. iv. 3.

## THE RAINBOW ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE.

We live in the midst of the material; it is under our feet; it is on either hand of us; it canopies us. It is the material we eat, and drink, and breathe. It is for the material we long, and toil. Is there only the material in the universe? We crave for something more. We are fond of earth, its scenes and associations; but we long for another world than this, of higher nature, and more blissful conditions. Is there such a world? This question is not an echo that has come down the ages unattended by an answer. It has been answered. One has come through our heavens to earth who has cheered the human soul by making known the existence of another world than this, a world whose glories and delights transcend man's imaginings. In that world are the loftiest intelligences and the grandest prospects. It is the scene of the fullest revelation of God. Here is His eternal residence; here is His throne, from which go forth His laws, and from which He governs the universe.

It was this throne John saw, as, prepared by the Spirit, he had a glimpse into heaven. It was a marvelous sight. Its Divine Occupant appeared "like a Jasper stone and a Sardius;" round about it were lofty ones of state, of princely standing, who paid the profoundest worship and homage to Him Who sat thereon. There was also before the throne "as it were

a glassy sea like unto crystal," while surrounding it "there was a rainbow in sight like unto an emerald." This rainbow, no doubt, was full of delightful meaning to the mind of the Seer, as it is suggestive to us of thoughts that greatly interest our souls. Let us ponder over some of these. In doing so we remark—

I. THAT THE THRONE OF HEAVEN IS IN COVENANT RELATIONS WITH MAN. That God has isolated Himself from all His creatures and will have no communion with them is not the teaching of the Bible. On the contrary, we learn from it that man may have access to God, and that God has come to man and talked with him, and even entered into covenant relations with him.

This He did with Noah, Abraham and Moses, and this He does with us.

On certain conditions made clear in His Word, God has bound Himself to do great things for man. Of the covenant thus made Paul has much to say in his epistle to the Hebrews. He delights to speak of the New Covenant in contrast to the Old, because of its greater teachings, and its sublimer privileges. Through this covenant man has a greater Priest, a more potent Sacrifice, and vastly richer spiritual blessings.

As the bow on the storm cloud was a token to Noah of God's promise not to destroy the earth again by a flood; so this rainbow about the throne was a token of God's covenant to bestow upon man on certain conditions, the fulness of the blessings of the salvation from sin. As we see with John this bow canopy the throne we cannot but conclude

1. *That God's covenant with man is in perfect harmony with the Divine nature.* As the different colors of light show themselves in the rainbow, so do the attributes of the Divine nature show themselves in God's covenant with man. This covenant does not exist because some of the Divine attributes have overridden the others; but because all of God's nature would have it exist.

"Here the whole Deity is known,  
Nor dares a creature guess  
Which of the glories brighter shone,  
The justice or the grace."

2. *The covenant is there in harmony with the Divine government.* It embraces the throne in its sweep. The governments of earth have no provision for mercy in them; they have no legislation as to the forgiveness of transgressors. Their business is to maintain right—by legislation and its enforcement.

But this government has made provision for the pardon of transgressors. The ground of this provision is the most wonderful of sacrifices, displaying the Divine love for man as it is nowhere else seen in all the universe. And the wisdom of the provision is manifest in that rebels against the Divine throne become through it most loving, and loyal subjects, rejoicing to bring all in rebellion into allegiance to the Divine rule. Another thought is—

II. *THAT THE ACTS OF THE DIVINE THRONE THAT AFFECT MAN ARE EVER DONE IN VIEW OF THIS COVENANT RELATION.* How God stoops to man's intellect

that He may impress upon him His meaning and purpose! He put a bow in the cloud in the day of Noah, not to aid man's memory only, but as it were to aid His own; for he said: "And it shall come to pass when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant," etc. Then the bow around the throne which John saw, ever kept, reverently be it said, God in remembrance of His covenant with men. All His acts toward man have ever in them the merciful and loving regard of which the rainbow speaks. Let us illustrate this joy-giving truth.

1. *Turn to God's doings in nature.* It is not difficult to see His kindness when the day is sunshiny, and the air balmy, when all nature seems to smile as if full of happiness. But when the storm cloud spans the heavens, and the winds rush abroad with cyclonic fury causing havoc of property, and dismay to men's souls, then it is not so apparent that God is kind and munificent. Yet the terrible phenomena of nature are controlled by God for the good of man. The storm purifies the air, and the volcano's eruption saves from ruin the cities of a vast region.

2. *Turn to history.* In times of prosperity and peace it is easy to be thankful for Divine care; but in times of war it is not so easy; for the Divine care is not so apparent. When Christianity is smiled upon everywhere, and genius is used in setting forth the glory of its Christ, and His Book, it is a time for rejoicing and praise to God for such a state of mind; but when Christianity is being criticised, its Christ, as Divine, ignored, and its Book brought down to the

level of common literature, it is not so easy to rejoice and be happy.

Yet, in permitting wars, God acts in view of the rainbow about His throne; so also in suffering His Son and His Book to be criticised and despised. It is true to history that wars have resulted in the advancement of nations, that the extirpation of peoples, as of those mentioned in Scripture, has been for the good of the whole earth, and that the criticism of Christ, and of the Bible, has redounded to the increase of the influence of both, by more fully showing that their claim to divinity is grounded on the everlasting granite of truth.

3. *Turn to the individual experience of life.* God suffers reverses, and pain, and bereavement to come to His own children; but He does so remembering His covenant. All His acts, severe though many of them seem, are for the good of His own. He sends affliction on men in rebellion against Him; but He desires to lead them to Himself by doing so.

The doings of this throne are often mysterious. No mortal can interpret their meaning. Nevertheless, this truth is always gladdening that, though God's doings may be wrapped in mystery, there is always the rainbow about them. Another thought is—

III. THAT THE VISION OF THE THRONE TOGETHER WITH THE RAINBOW GIVES US A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF God. If we contemplate God as He appears in John's vision apart from the rainbow, we shall think of the unity of His nature, of the rectitude of His government, of the grandeur of His court, of the homage paid Him by the high ones of heaven, of the thunder-

ings, and lightnings, and voices of His power; but will we have a true conception of God? If we have, what is there in it to give comfort and peace to sinful man? If this be the God we have to deal with, there is no chance of escape from hell for sinful man.

But the vision of the throne, its Occupant and surroundings apart from the rainbow, does not give us a just conception of God. In order to have such a conception we must also look at God as the rainbow reveals Him. Then beside being the Almighty King Whose government extends over all being, He will also appear the All-Merciful Saviour, full of compassion for sinners, ready to save all who believe on His Son.

If we look at God from the point of view of the throne only, we shall have wrong notions of God; so shall we have wrong notions if we consider Him from the point of view of the rainbow only. But if we view Him from both the rainbow and the throne we shall rightly know Him. Another thought is—

IV. THAT THE EMERALD CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS RAINBOW WAS INTENDED SPECIALLY TO IMPRESS US.

"Emerald" was its marked characteristic. It impressed John; and was doubtless intended to impress us. But what can we learn from this fact?

1. *That God would have men see that mercy is the grace He most delights to manifest.* We take the emerald as a symbol of mercy. Its color is the most refreshing to the human eye. We may seem to be traveling again a path of thought already trodden; but it is evident that the emerald of the rainbow was intended to be especially noticed. The glory of God's



covenant with men is in the mercy it shows. He has not covenanted for personal aggrandizement. While He would have the universe acknowledge His authority and power, He would have it known that He chiefly delights in being merciful.

2. *That the Divine covenant with men is ever enduring.* To the ancients the emerald was an emblem of unchangeableness. As long as the conditions exist that occasion this rainbow, so long shall its beauties adorn the throne, and give gladness to all beholders.

3. *That the contemplation of the covenant would be always attractive and comforting.* Who ever gets weary looking at the rainbow? Is not this phenomenon in nature ever attractive, though men have been accustomed to its appearance for untold centuries? Is not the soft emerald green ever attractive and pleasing to the sense of vision? So ever has been, and ever shall be, God's covenant of grace with men. Earth shall never tire of contemplating it.

In conclusion: 1. *The rainbow round about the throne makes the contemplation of God comforting.* There is nothing in mere almightiness, or holiness, to give comfort to a poor heart that is smitten by sin.

2. *That the way to the throne of God is by the way of the covenant.* There is no approaching the throne from earth but through the rainbow that surrounds it.

“No good word, or work, or thought,  
Bring I to buy thy grace;  
Pardon I accept unbought,  
Thy proffer I embrace,  
Coming, as at first I came,

To take, and not bestow on thee:  
Friend of sinners, spotless Lamb,  
Thy blood was shed for me."

3. *That the rainbow round the throne should give us comfort in life's trials.* He who ruleth the universe is deeply interested in His children, so deeply, that He will allow nothing to harm them. He has pledged Himself to their defense. The laws of nature may be suspended, and worlds in consequence go to wreck and ruin; but no word of His shall remain unfulfilled. O what reason the Christian has to dry his tears!

"Awake, and bid good night  
To griefs that hang around!  
Look to the cheering light,  
For thee thy God is found!  
What though thou rulest not ,  
Nor can the clouds dispel,  
Our God the whole directs,  
And ruleth all things well."

THE END OF TIME.

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.”—Rev. x. 5, 6.

## THE END OF TIME.

Not until we stand amid the light of heaven's throne and have a full view of the mighty agencies God has used in the operations of His providence among men to bring about His purposes, will be seen the extent to which angels have been connected with the history of earth. The angel of our text was a marvelous being. He was mighty in power, clad in majesty, round his head was a rainbow, indicative, perhaps, of the merciful character of his mission; while his face shone with the glory of the sun, and his feet were as pillars of fire. So remarkable was this angel that men have thought him to be more than a created being and have entitled and considered him the Son of God. But why should the majesty of this angel lead men to thus consider him? Who can tell the greatness of angels, especially of those of highest rank; for there seem to be grades among them. There are men of mightier powers than others, and so may there be angels that excel their fellows in strength. There is no good argument for considering this angel Jesus Christ.

But it is not the grandeur of the actor in our text that claims our attention at present; it is the subject of his asservation. What did he mean when he said that "time should be no longer?" Men have sought to answer this question, and very divergent have been their replies. Some have thought that the angel

should be understood as declaring that time of which we gain conceptions through the happening of events, and the revolutions of the earth on its axis, or around the sun, would cease to be. Others have understood the angel as meaning that, there should be no longer delay in the accomplishment of the Divine purposes; no further postponement of the Divine purposes regarding His people. Whatever may be the true meaning of the angel's emphatic declaration, it will not be disputed by those who believe the Scriptures, that the following propositions suggested by our text are true:

I. IT SHALL YET BE TRUE AS TO THE WORLD'S HISTORY THAT ITS TIME SHALL BE NO LONGER. Men have sought to write the world's history. They have examined the nature of traditions; they have read the ancient poets of countries; they have deciphered inscriptions on monuments, on coins, and medals; they have examined the archives of states; they have looked into every nook and corner where footprints or finger-marks of the ages are to be found, to discover facts about peoples; and they have gathered up the results of their researches and put them into volumes, over which, as people ponder, their imagination and judgment are strengthened; they are prepared the better to meet a world that ever confronts men with the same experiences; they are impressed with the truth that the ages have ever, at least in sentiment, esteemed virtue above vice, and that true glory is not in the deeds of martial valor, but in doing the right at any cost.

But while vast volumes have been filled with the

world's history, many more might be written, were the facts known. A large part of this history has disappeared like the fabled Atlantis—even from tradition. What events are yet to be recorded! for marvellous prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. What wars, what falling of stars from political heavens, what revolutions, are yet to occur!

But there shall come a juncture when the historian will abandon his pen, for the events of earth shall have ceased. There shall be no more time for wars, or revolutions; no more time for overthrowing thrones or building up empires; no more time for following trades, or pushing the interests of commerce. There is coming the time at which the inhabitants of earth shall stop forever the activities that make the world's history, and find themselves so situated that the motions of orbs shall no longer measure their time. When such shall be the condition of things, it shall be seen that God was behind the panorama of the ages, managing its shifting scenes, though men only at times caught glimpses of Him. When earth's day has passed and eternity's shall have dawned, men shall see the philosophy of history as now they cannot. There will be seen to have been a Divine meaning in all its events.

II. IT WILL YET BE TRUE CONCERNING THE DURATION OF OUR PHYSICAL WORLD, THAT ITS TIME SHALL BE NO LONGER. Our earth is beautiful. Its landscapes, its rivers, its seas, its mountains, its glorious sky flooded with the sunbeams, and its star-lit vault of night; all, all, are most attractive to the mind, and inspiring to the soul. But this world was created

for a purpose—it was created for Christ. Here were great problems to be worked out. With its history from the beginning, Christ is identified. But the time will come when God's problems shall all have been worked out, when the purpose for which it was created for Christ shall have been accomplished; and it shall be destroyed.

God is not like those of antiquarian tastes, who would preserve a thing because of its history. He will not preserve this world because that here the great problem of man's salvation was wrought out, or because that here was the place where He Himself made His grandest revelations of Himself; or because that here was the place of the cross, where was offered the sacrifice for the world's redemption; in which sacrifice the universe is, perhaps, interested, and by it benefited. No, He will not preserve it for its history's sake; the time is coming when He shall burn it up.

"The great globe itself  
And all that it inherits, shall dissolve;  
And like the baseless fabric of a vision  
Leave not a wreck behind."

Our world was once destroyed by water; but when again destruction shall seize upon it, it shall be by fire. When the waters surged over the continents and isles of the earth in the time of the deluge, we know not what changes were made in its mountains, and seas, and lands; but when the fires that shall destroy it shall break forth, the heavens shall melt, all that is in it shall be burned up; the seas shall boil, and their waters evaporate. Imagination may paint scenes so



appalling that even angels might shrink from beholding them; but no mind can adequately conceive the awfulness of the scene of earth's writhing in the fires of her doom.

Now, there is coming that point of time beyond which there shall be no more time before the fatal fire shall wrap the earth in her winding sheet of flame. That period may not be near; but it is hastening. From earth, men with astronomic vision have seen worlds afire—so they have thought; but the time is coming when, perhaps, the inhabitants of other worlds will behold our earth ablaze.

III. IT WILL YET BE TRUE THAT THE TIME OF CHRIST'S INCOMPLETED VICTORY SHALL BE NO LONGER. Centuries ago the Conqueror went forth on His white horse, with the avowed purpose of destroying the works of the devil. Vast was the campaign He undertook, and mighty were the forces that arose against Him. But He had no doubt that He would win the day. As a warrior, He did not start out on His expedition of the world's conquest before counting the cost, and considering the difficulties in His way. He saw the mighty forces of hell and men He would have to overcome; He understood the vast expenditure the undertaking would incur; He saw the need there would be for true and valiant coadjutors in the task He had undertaken; yet, with all this before His eye He wavered not in His purposes; but so confident was He of complete success that He uttered the triumphant words, "I have overcome the world."

Centuries have passed since then, and yet His

lofty purpose is not fully accomplished. Many are the adversaries He has annihilated; nations that opposed Him have been desolated; men of lofty position who were bitter in their antagonism have, like stars from the heavens, been flung to destruction. And yet His triumph is far from complete. But a minor part of earth has surrendered to Him.

But the victory shall not always be imperfect. It shall yet be true that His dominion is from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the end of the earth. Yet shall the poet forever cease to sing

"Careless seems the great Avenger;  
History's pages but record  
One death grapple in the darkness  
'Twixt false systems and the Word."

for the struggle between false systems and the Word shall have forever ceased. When the time of Christ's incomplete victory shall be no longer, then of some other things shall the same fact be predicable.

1. *Then shall the persecutions of Christ and His people be no longer.* From the very beginning Christ and His people have been objects of men's scorn and hate. Nero destroyed them to gratify his passion for cruelty; but when Christians became distinct from the Jews as religious people, then Roman law was against them, and they were treated with the greatest cruelty, as practicing an unlawful religion. But not only in early times were the followers of Christ persecuted; they are so treated to-day. In China, in the Empire of Turkey, and elsewhere, they are slain for their faith. But when the victory of Christ shall be

complete, then shall persecution forever have ceased ;  
and then shall

“One song employ all nations, and all sing  
Worthy is the Lamb, for He was slain for us.”

2. *Then shall unbelief in its various phases be no longer.* Christ has met with such opposition that the hearts of His followers have often feared that His truth would be driven from the field. But the time is coming when unbelief shall no longer exist ; when the Materialist, the Pantheist, the Agnostic, the Deist, shall bow at the font of Christianity, and receiving baptism in the name of the Trinity, shall rise to join the society of those whose highest joys are found in Jesus Christ alone.

3. *Then shall have ceased those agencies whose operations have impeded the progress of Christ's cause among men.* The names of these are many. They have been staunch allies of hell, and have done fearful mischief. Rum, theatres, haunts of vice, etc.

Hegesippus tells us that, when Domitian heard that relatives of Jesus were still living in Palestine, he was terrified at the news, and summoned them before him. But when they told his majesty that they lived on a small estate, which they cultivated themselves, and that the kingdom of Christ was not of this world, and would not come till the end of all things, they were dismissed without hurt. Perhaps he thought that if Christ's kingdom were not to come till the end of all things, its coming was a great way off. And it was ; and may still be ; but as certain as the sun shall rise to-morrow, so shall it be true that

His kingdom has come—that no longer time shall be needed to complete its victories.

IV. IT SHALL YET BE TRUE THAT FOR THE INCREASE OF THE RACE TIME, SHALL BE NO LONGER. Man is the highest point in creation's work. He is the link that unites creation to the Creator. Great is the nature he possesses; and great is the esteem in which he is held in heaven. The time of his origin is a problem with which students are wrestling; and how he began is a question equally puzzling.

But there was a time when man first appeared on this planet; and, since then, vast numbers of his kind have been born. At this present moment, great is the population of the globe; and it is ever increasing. One generation passes away like the receding wave from the shore; but another generation comes, of greater numbers than the one just departed. And so will it continue to be, no one knows how long. Yet this is known, that, it shall not be forever; for there is coming a period in the history of the race when its last child shall be born; when a stop shall come to the propagation of the family of man. But the race shall not then hasten to extinction, as some animals have done whose fossils are all that remain of them. The first and the last, and every soul that has lived between them, shall survive the declaration of the angel, as to time's end—as long as the throne of God shall endure.

V. IT SHALL YET BE TRUE THAT THE TIME OF GOD'S PATIENCE WITH SINNERS SHALL BE NO LONGER. How great is the patience of God! He does not bear with sinners because He is unable to

deal with them for their sins; but because of merciful patience. He has shown the reason of his patience in measures He has taken to bring sinners to see themselves, and to repent of their sins. But His patience with them will not be forever. Its time will come to an end. This is true

1. *Concerning nations.* They have their day of grace. God by His severe providences seeks to awake them from their sinful lethargy. He punishes them, that He may purify them; but He will not continue this work always. He sent judgments on Jerusalem, that He might lead her to repentance; but she would not be thus led. The time of God's grace and forbearance ceased, and the most appalling destruction befel her. He sent judgment on Rome to arouse her to see her degradation; but she would not awake; and the time of her doom came. How many nations have disappeared from earth, like stars from the firmament of the heavens, because the day of God's patience with them came to an end, and time for repentance was no more. God is to-day by severe dispensations, by alarming signs in the political sky, seeking to arouse nations to turn from their godlessness, and their abominations to serve Him; but the day of His forbearance will not be forever. It shall yet be true concerning it, in their cases, that time shall be no longer. This is true

2. *Concerning individuals.* How mistaken they are who think that the reason they are not visited for their sins is, that God does not notice them; that punishment for transgression is more a pulpit utterance than a real fact. In olden times men thought

that God was like themselves, since He did not at once visit them for their sins. Men wrongly interpret the silence of God. It is because He is patient with transgressors, that they may have time to repent, that He is silent while they sin. But the time is coming when He shall be silent no longer; that period is coming when time for repentance shall cease, and an eternity of judgment commence. This is an awful thought.

VI. IT SHALL YET BE TRUE THAT TIME WITH EACH OF US SHALL BE NO LONGER. Yes, the last hour, the last minute of time that shall ever be ours is coming. We shall ere long be done with all terrestrial measurements of our lives' length. We shall enter on eternity! This is an alarming fact to the sinner; it is a glorious fact to the saint. The former shall be forever with his sins; the latter shall be forever with his Saviour.

FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE.

"And he had in his hand a little book open."—Rev. x. 2.



## FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE.

The interpretation of much of the symbolism of the Apocalypse baffles the genius of the most keen-eyed interpreter. There are writers and preachers who see but little difficulty in explaining this book from beginning to end. They appear to be able to uncover the meaning of its visions, and settle, without much hesitancy, the times of its events. But attention expended on most of their productions is wasted energy. They are often efforts to bolster up a theory for which there is needed Scripture support. Who was the angel whose hand held the little book? One declares that Luther is meant; another, that a mighty and beneficent human instrumentality is to be understood; whilst another declares that this angel was the Lord Jesus Christ. These give their reasons for their interpretations; but how widely men have differed in their understanding of this angel may be seen from the fact that, Jenour looked upon him as "an imposter and an usurper."

But, if there exist such differences of opinion as to the angel that held the little book in his hand, the question arises, is there any clearer knowledge as to the book itself? The answer is ready, and indisputable—there is not. The diversity of views as to the meaning of the "little book" far outnumbers those held regarding the angel. Bullinger considered it the Gospel preached by the Reformers; Bishop Newton

looked upon it as a supplement to the sealed book; to Henstenberg it was the Destinies of the Church; to Augustine, and others, it meant the Bible, while Elliott regarded it as the New Testament, or the Gospels. And these are but some of the opinions held as to its meaning. If, however, we should use the facts stated in connection with this "little book," as suggesting some truths about the Holy Scriptures, we would not be making a questionable use of them. Such use we shall make of them. They suggest—

I. THAT THE BIBLE IS A BOOK OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. The mighty angel of which the passage speaks, brought the "little book" he held open in his hand from heaven. It cannot be thought that a being of such marvelous appearance would bring from the celestial clime a book that was to have the special attention of the Seer, which book was of trifling importance. It was evidently a book of vast importance.

That the Bible has come from heaven would be reason sufficient to consider it a book of great importance; but the examination of its contents shows beyond all dispute that it is. In it are revelations of God to man, and man to himself. In it are the answers to man's heart problems, and truths that are sweeter than honeycombs to his soul in the times of dire need. The world might get along without its volumes on science and philosophy; without the poems of its singers, and the orations of its eloquent sons; but if its sin be exposed, its pride condemned; if the fountain for soul cleansing be pointed out to it—the way of salvation that leads from low living to

the heights of manhood and heaven, it must have the Bible.

That the Bible is from heaven has not the same evidence that the "little book" had of its celestial origin. John saw it in the angel's hand as he came from heaven. Yet we have such evidence of its divine origin that we cannot rationally doubt that it has come from God. Only God could give us the revelation of Himself it contains. Only He who made human nature could adapt the teachings of this book to fit so exactly into the needs of that nature. Its style impresses us with its supernaturalness, there is a spirit in its words that takes hold upon the soul and influences and uplifts it, as the words of no writer of prose or verse ever does, however classic may be his language. The truth is that the spirit in the book is the Divine Spirit. It is He who through its utterances inspires men to noblest works of art; noblest deeds of philanthropy; and to build character on the divinest foundation, and after the sublimest model. That this book has come from God, and is permeated by the spirit of God, is evidence of its vast importance to men. They suggest—

II. SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIBLE. The angel from whose hand John received the book is described in the opening verse of this chapter. Now, as the object of special attention in this vision is the "little book," it is surely not too imaginative to think that the description of the angel holding this book in his hand was a symbolic representation of the characteristics of the book itself. Thus considered,

the description of the angel suggests great facts concerning the Bible.

1. *The angel was mighty.* Such has the Bible ever proven itself to be. The thoughts of men have wrought wonders. They have overturned empires; they have wrought reformations; they have turned peasants into kings; they have made the lonely and the obscure the attraction of the world. But the thoughts of the Bible, which are the thoughts of God, have wrought revolutions that no merely human force could bring about, revolutions which have made possible many of mind's greatest achievements. The might of the Bible has been witnessed in the triumphs of its truths over heathenism; in its influence on legislation; its hold upon the intellect of thinkers; its dominance in the commercial and political worlds. When has not the Bible manifested its power to sway the minds and motives of men? It has been, and is to-day as much as ever, a mighty book. While the books of the other religions are losing their hold upon the minds of their followers, this book is taking a large and more potent grip on the minds and hearts of the race.

2. *The angel was clothed with a cloud.* This was a symbol of mystery and majesty, and suggests that the Bible has mystery connected with it, but that it also has majesty. About some of the great truths of this book there hang clouds of mystery; about the meaning of some of the visions John saw there is much obscurity. But there is also a marvelous majesty about the utterances of this book. It speaks to men's consciences, and they are obliged to listen to it,

whether they obey or not. It never stands back to give place to any other book; but requires, and to a great extent has, the deference of the literature of Christendom. Men feel its dignity, and manifest reverence for it. As they read its pages, they do so as if God were speaking to them.

3. *The angel had a rainbow upon his head.* This was a token of mercy and peace. The prominent characteristic of the Bible is that it speaks of mercy for men. However much men may be puzzled to understand some things in the Bible, this they see clearly, that God has the most thoughtful and loving regard for them.

4. *The face of the angel was as it were the sun.* His face shone not with the glory of the day, for then its light would have been reflected light; but it was itself as a sun—the maker of day. The Bible is itself the source of light; God has made it such. The light that makes the day of Christendom has come from it. As the sun's light is adequate to make the day, so is the light of the Bible adequate to make that day of religious knowledge that man needs. The Bible has plentitude of light for human hearts and minds.

5. *The angel had feet like pillars of fire.* How impressive his tread! How steady his movements! How immovable wherever he took his stand. Wherever the Bible has gone it has made the profoundest impression. As it has come into contact with evil, it has set its burning foot upon it and destroyed it. It does not move hesitatingly among men, but with the steadiness and positiveness of pillar-like feet, whose legs are

also pillars. Nor is its truth shakable by all of the power of argument brought against it.

6. *The angel stood upon the sea and upon the earth.* Thereby indicating that his dominion was over all the earth. The Bible has the characteristic that it is suited to universal man, and is destined to illuminate him with its light, and sway him with its principles. They suggest—

III. FACTS THAT SHOULD OBTAIN REGARDING THE BIBLE, AND THE OPPOSITION THOSE FACTS HAVE MET.

1. *In the hand of the angel this "little book" was open.* There is a difference in this respect between this book and the one closed with seven seals. The former contained divine secrets, which were not to be known by man, only as they were unfolded; this book contains information that was meant to be possessed by all. Thus is it symbolic of the truth that the Bible should be to all people an open book. Every man on the planet has an interest in its teachings, and a right to consult it in his own behalf.

2. *The angel cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth.* Whatever the angel said was not uttered in an undertone, as if afraid of being heard; but with a voice that reverberated over earth and sea, as if it would have all the world hear it. So should the truth of the Bible be proclaimed with lion-like boldness. As the roar of the lion arouses men to look about them and consider their situation, so should the utterance of divine truth arouse men to look into their moral situation and condition. It was the lion-like voice of Bible truth that awoke Europe in Reformation days; in the days of the Wesleys; and it is the

courageous utterances of these truths that shall yet awake men. Pentecosts follow their utterance.

3. *But the cry of the angel was followed by thunders.* This apparent response to the angel's voice was symbolic of the opposition an open Bible and heroic utterances of its truth would produce in days to come, which opposition has often since taken place. How often have the "Thunders of the Vatican" been heard to roar against the Bible. At one time Luther was disposed to listen to these thunders "as the voice of Christ speaking in him." But when light from God's Word and Spirit more fully shone in on his soul, he considered them "the infernal voices of anti-Christ." But in vain all such thunderings against this book, it shall continue its mission in the world; princes and potentates shall accept its principles and hasten to enjoy the salvation it speaks of. It shall keep on in its conquering way, notwithstanding the antagonisms that may arise against it, until the utterances of the prophets shall have been fulfilled, God's purposes with the church accomplished, and thus His mystery finished. There is suggested that

IV. THE BIBLE SHOULD BE PERSONALLY APPROPRIATED. John was to take the "little book" from the hand of the angel and eat it up. This suggests the use that should be made of the Bible. The artist uses the Bible to suggest scenes for his pencil; the poet uses it to suggest highest themes for song; the litterateur uses it because it furnishes him sublimest specimens of literary style; the historian reads it for the facts it gives him of ancient times. But these are not the uses the Bible was intended for primarily. Its

proper use is to be eaten—so appropriated that it may enter the life.

The Word of God is the food of the soul. We are to read it, and thus take it into our minds; we are to meditate upon it, and thus digest and assimilate it, so that it shall become our very life. It is only thus that it will profit us. As long as it is a mere object of admiration, or an object for whose position in our nation we would contend, it is of but little profit to us. It is only when it enters us; when its principles become our principles; its spirit our spirit, that it answers the purposes for which it was given to man. There are suggested—

V. SOME OF THE RESULTS THAT COME FROM THE RIGHT USE OF THE BIBLE.

1. *Pleasure.* Revelation of the Divine Father's will; full of promises of good.

2. *Pain.* Its eating and digesting cause bitterness. As the truth of God enters the soul, the sins of life become more apparent, and the sense of guilt and uncleanness more distressing. It is then that the denunciations of God against sinners become more alarming. On the entrance of God's Word into the soul, often it causes bitterness, which is expressed in repentance; but the declaration of the Gospel it contains is sweet as honey in the mouth.

3. *Fitness for religious work.* "And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." The preparation that above all others is needed to fill the souls of men with Divine thoughts is a digested knowledge of the word of God. There is but one book that must



necessarily be taken into the mind and heart to fit for the work of saving men, and that book is the Bible. It is the sun book; let all others be looked upon only as planets and satellites.



CHRISTIANITY'S VOICE.

"And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither."—Rev. xi. 12.

## CHRISTIANITY'S VOICE.

Men see no longer such visions as John saw. The panorama of the Church's history passed once for all time before the eye of the exiled Seer. But while such scenes may never be witnessed again, voices from heaven have not ceased to be heard by men. It is these voices that stimulate the soul to aspire after high things. The voice of nature calls to us to ascend her heights that we may possess grander views of God, and nobler conceptions of ourselves than we can get in the lowlands of common things. But Christianity is the great voice from heaven calling men to come up to truer reasoning concerning Christ, grander conceptions of life, higher riches, and purer enjoyments of soul than are to be found down on the intellectual and moral flats and marshes of earth, where the masses of humanity dwell. Without attempting an explanation of the text, we shall consider the voice it speaks of as the voice of Christianity speaking to various classes of men. Doing so we remark—

I. *That the voice of Christianity invites the unbeliever up to a higher plane of reasoning than that on which he rejects Christ.* There are those who reject Christ who do so because they do not like His teachings. The ground of their opposition is their own heart. There are those who reason against Christ, and declare that their logic leads them to reject Him.

These reason from their own conceptions of things. That which is out of accord with their notions they will not entertain. Hence the divine in Christ's birth they deny; they deny also the miracles, and that He was any more than any other man, as to His nature.

But Christianity invites to a higher ground of reasoning concerning Jesus. Assuming He is God, was the conduct of His life below the highest conception of the character of the Deity? There is no historic fact more clearly proven than that He arose from the dead; if by His own power, would not that act be in harmony with His claim to Divinity; if by the power of God, and not by His own act, would not that fact show that all His claims were sanctioned by the Divine? Paul believed in His history, and therefore in His miracles, and from being an ardent hater of Jesus, he became an ardent lover. But consider the work of Jesus in all the ages—to-day. He is working miracles now. It is a grander miracle wrought on a man to make him a new creature, and start him on the upward path of manhood, than to give him eyes, or limbs, or even to raise him from the dead. This Jesus does. Millions are witnesses to the fact. Christianity invites up to the plane of those high truths, that in their light the unbeliever may reason concerning Jesus. We remark—

II. *That the voice of Christianity invites the practical atheist to rise to higher conduct towards God, than is his at present.* There are great numbers of people who are thoroughly orthodox in their belief, whose lives give no proof of this fact. There are those who have God in their creed; but He does not appear

in their life. They attend to life's affairs without any reference to Him. Indeed, there are people who are members of church who are the most dangerous kind of atheists, for God is not in their thoughts. Thus do they attend to business, seek pleasure, and control their households. He lives low, who lives without God, even though his home be a mansion, his fare sumptuous, and his companions the elite of society.

Christianity invites such up to higher conduct towards God. Christianity would not only have God in the creed of men, but also in their lives. Christianity invites to godly living. This is high living in the truest sense—to love God in the business life; love Him in the social life; love Him in the domestic life; live with the eye and heart fixed on Him ever. It would have men not only know about God, but possess Him, and enjoy Him. He who rises from his practical atheism, to thus comport himself towards God, rises from earth to heaven. We remark—

III. *The voice of Christianity calls men from the dust of materialism up to the high heights of spiritual life.* The tendency of the race is towards low living. With most people material things are most valued; there is nothing within their horizon that so engages them. In the early days, sense had the mastery of them, and in their riper years it has more potent sway. To live in the dust is to live near the plane of the animal. He who is busy with both hands grasping the earthly, thinks but little, if at all, of anything higher.

But Christianity calls to all who are living the low life to come up higher. It tells of a world of higher riches than material, of sublimer pleasures than money

can procure, of nobler fellowship than material things make possible. This world it tells us of is spiritual in its nature; it is above the material; it is intended to rule it; its life is the divinest; and its riches are infinitely more valuable than are found in the treasures of the sea, or the mines of the mountains. The voice of Christianity heard from this world cries to all the grovellers on earth, come up hither. We remark—

IV. *The voice of Christianity invites the mere formalists to come up where they may enjoy the power as well as the form of godliness.* Religion has its forms. Life takes to itself a form according to its character. But mere form is lifeless. The form of a man merely is no man at all. The mere form of religion is not worthy of the name. And yet this sort of religion many have. They are sticklers for rites, and ceremonies. But what good is this religion to its possessors? What comfort does it give them? What triumph over spiritual foes? What foretastes of heaven? They who possess it live on a very low plane, and are classed with abominably low people.

The voice of Christianity calls on all such to come up higher. There is power in religion, Christianity declares. Come up from the low lands of spiritual death, and enjoy this power. We remark—

V. *That the voice of Christianity calls on the genuine Christian to come up to higher degrees of spiritual experience.* God does great things for man when He emancipates him from his sins, and puts the song of salvation into his heart. How blessed his experience now! But the work of God in his soul has just begun.



His present experience is but a foretaste. Blessings received already may yet be had in greater degrees; there are higher heights to be reached. The voice of Christianity is ever inviting the Christian to rise to these higher heights and grander attainments. Let us go up hither. We remark—

VI. *The voice of Christianity calls to the Christian, dejected because of life's trials, to come up from the region of despondency to the calm heights of faith in God.* The best of men are tried. There is no road so smooth for the chosen of God that it does not present difficulties, and try strength. The voyage to the skies is not over seas that are never storm-tossed. And often is the Christian despondent under these trials. He sighs and wonders why he suffers so much.

But the voice of Christianity invites him up to the path of faith. There is a place where trials may be borne with great calmness of soul. A life of trust in God is a far higher one, than is the gloomy and despondent. There is sunshine in the Lord, while all without may be swept by the tempest.

“O holy trust! O endless sense of rest!  
Like the beloved John,  
To lay his head upon the Saviour's breast,  
And thus to journey on.”

VII. *The voice of Christianity invites sinners to come up from their low life of sin, to lead the higher and nobler one of the Christian.* How loud is this voice? It is heard almost everywhere on earth. There is a higher and grander walk of life than that trodden by vast numbers of men. In it there is peace with

God enjoyed; there are the possibilities of high soul attainments. It is the path of victory in life and in death.

In conclusion: Christianity's voice is ever elevating. It never calls men to low things; but ever is its voice heard bidding men rise and possess God and heaven.

THE SEALESS WORLD.

"There was no more sea."—Rev. 21 : 1.

## THE SEALESS WORLD.

Our views of things are very much modified by the way in which they affect us. The scientist loves to tell us of the uses of the sea, and we are pleased with his information. To the lover of nature there is no scene more grand than the ocean in its different phases. Even when the hurricane raves through its domain and possessing it like a mighty spirit of wrath, makes it froth and foam and leap upon the continents and isles, there is to his soul something majestically grand in it. The dweller far inland looks toward it as a reservoir of health, and seeks its cool shores when the summer's suns are strong. The old fisherman loves to listen to the profound murmur of its waves as they break along the shore.

But to Napoleon the exile, in lonely Helena, the sea was a great enemy that kept him confined from the France he loved, and the soldiers he delighted to marshal. To John it was a mighty barrier. The world was famishing for lack of the Gospel; but the sea that wildly dashed against the rocks of Patmos leagued with a despot to keep him from his loved mission of preaching that Gospel to men. Away yonder were the home he loved and the scenes that were most dear to him, but the sea kept him in exile, while even the very sea fowls shrieked for joy of liberty, and the winds taunted him with their song of freedom. We can see why John was delighted as gazing upon the city of God he saw no sea there.

We will take our text as suggesting important spiritual truths.

I. THERE WILL BE NO BARRIER IN THE WAY OF THE ENJOYMENT OF OUR DESIRES. How must John have wished to be in his place in the church in Ephesus; but beside the Emperor's sentence, the sea was in his way. And many a parent, brother and sister, would visit those who have gone from home to other lands, but for fear of crossing it. For long ages it kept nations so far apart that many of them were not known to each other. This was no doubt in harmony with the Divine purpose, for if they had had intercourse with each other in the early ages they might have greatly corrupted each other; and beside, this separation led to the development of national distinctions, which are necessary to the progress of the race.

But the sea as a barrier may be considered emblematic of other barriers that are in the way of the realization of our desires. There is the barrier of ill health, which prevents from reaching ambition's goal. Has not the student often been estopped by it? There is the barrier of poverty which like a sea lies between us and the objects we would love to possess, and the lands in which we would delight to travel. The sea of death separates us from our loved ones who have passed away. There are the barriers of ignorance, of caste, and others, which like seas, that are impassible, lie in the way of the realization of the desires of many.

But there are no barriers in heaven to the fullest enjoyment of the desires of the soul. No sea there

to keep John from the object of his heart's love; neither death, nor ill health, nor poverty, nor ignorance, stands in the way of the fullest enjoyment of all the soul's desires; for none of these things exists there.

II. THERE IS NO UNREST THERE. What so restless as the sea? It has been everywhere, and has had to do with nearly everything. The tempest hushes, and the air becomes still; the beasts of prey go to their lairs and fall into sound slumber; but the sea rests never. Emblem of the unrest of earth—How full of it is man! How insatiable his desires! How changeful his circumstances!

But there will be no unrest in heaven. The things that cause disquietude on earth, do not exist in the Better Land.

But while there will be no unrest, there will nevertheless be the change that is implied in progress. What a world that will be! Eternal advancement without the drawbacks of sorrow, care and pain, that mark the career of man here.

IV. THERE WILL BE NO MORE REBELLION AGAINST GOD. The conduct of people against God is described as the floods lifting up their voice, and as the noise of many waters. Here men are permitted to rise up against God, to direct their antagonisms against Him as the sea flings its waves against the cliffs on its shore. The Apocalypse abounds with statements as to this antagonism, and also with teachings as to the futility of all such conduct. God shall make the wrath of man to praise Him.

But in heaven there is no rebellion against God.

There are no rebellious wills there. The hearts of all heaven beat in most loving unison with the heart of God.

V. THERE ARE NO STORMS THERE. What destruction the sea has wrought! What proud vessels have its angry billows flung to its dark depths! Human lives have their storms. Many beside the Psalmist have cried out, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me."

But there are no storms in heaven. No shipwrecks of soul, or fortune there.







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Thoughts on themes from Patmos : volume I /  
by William Downey. -- Philadelphia : [s.n.],  
1910.

288p. ; 20cm.

No more published?

1. Bible. N.T. Revelation--Sermons. I.  
Title. II. Title: Themes from Patmos.

CCSC/mmb

A27720

